the door to the realization of the dreams which we all hold for our children and for their children.

Let our statements today, remembering and openly condemning the atrocity committed against the Armenians, help renew a commitment of the American people to oppose any and all instances of genocide. As we enter the new millennium let us commit ourselves to finding new and peaceful paths for resolving differences which inevitably arise.

I thank you for the honor of sharing these thoughts and words with you today.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, together with my colleagues, to commemorate the Armenian Genocide of 1915–23. On this day, in 1915, over 200 Armenian leaders were systematically massacred by the Turkish Government. Yet these horrific murders were only a precursor to the brutality and aggressiveness that would follow. In just 8 years, over 1.5 million Armenian men, women, and children were murdered and an entire population was faced with annihilation. I stand today, not only to acknowledge and remember the horrors of this tragic event but to denounce the government of Turkey for their denial of these historically documented truths. The official position of the Turkish Government is that, during World War I, a series of internal conflicts contributed to the unfortunate deaths of many Armenians. This claim shamefully ignores the premeditated murder of these people. As Members of Congress and as human beings, it is our responsibility to defend the memories of those who needlessly suffered. We must preserve the dignity of lives destroyed by the cruelty of a government. Their plight deserves remembrance and the world deserves the truth. The Turkish Government's refusal to acknowledge the Armenian genocide is disgraceful and I find it to be an injustice, which should not be tolerated under any circumstances. It is essential to recognize the devastation that was incurred by ignoring the Armenian genocide and allowing such horrors to reoccur through the Holocaust. We remember the trauma befallen upon the Jews and we must now stand up for the suffering forced upon millions of Armenians. The world can no longer refute history. Instead we must come together as Armenians, as Jews and as human beings to guarantee that no person shall ever endure such pain again. I thank my colleagues, Congressman JOHN PORTER and Congressman FRANK PALLONE, for leading this effort in the House of Representatives, and am proud to be a member of the Armenian Issues Caucus in order to work on this issue of concern to all human beings.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I am appreciative of the efforts of my colleagues in taking out this special order and making it possible for us to reaffirm our absolute determination that the Armenian genocide will not go unnoticed. The world made a terrible mistake, with disastrous consequences, when it ignored the terrible crime committed by Turkey against the Armenian people 80 years and more ago. I continue to be baffled by the unwillingness of the current Turkish Government to acknowledge this horrible crime. I do not blame the current inhabitants of Turkey for the sins of their ancestors, but their refusal to acknowledge these terrible actions do them no credit.

As do many of my colleagues, I greatly admire the fierce commitment of the current generation of Armenians to honor the memory of the innocent people who were slaughtered simply because they were Armenian. They do a great service for the world by not only commemorating their own ancestors, but by focusing world attention on the terrible consequences of allowing crimes like this to go unopposed and unnoticed. Remembering the Armenian genocide is both an important tribute to those who were slaughtered and one step in making sure that this does not happen again.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this special order on the Armenian genocide.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman from California has nothing else, I would thank him for participating with me.

TWO GREAT AMERICANS: BOB DORNAN AND BILL BLAKEMORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. HUNTER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Georgia, JACK KINGSTON, for giving me some time here ahead of his 1 hour.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to say a few things about two great Americans. One of them is my good friend Bob Dornan, who is no longer with us, but may be back soon depending on the outcome of the election challenge that he has offered; and the other one is Bill Blakemore, a private American citizen who right now is in the hospital, the Methodist Hospital in Houston, TX, who is in pretty serious condition, but who was very, very important to this country in the 1980's when he helped to put together a group of Texas conservatives who rallied the country behind the idea that Central America was worth saving, and particularly that we needed to support the Contras, the freedom fighters who were fighting the Communist-backed, Soviet-backed insurgents or Soviet backed Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and also that we needed to protect the very fragile government of El Salvador, the government of Jose Duarte, which at that time was holding off the Soviet-backed FMLN.

□ 2015

When Ronald Reagan came into office in 1980, and I was lucky to be one of the people that came in with him as one of the 54 Republican Congressmen who were elected that year, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua were all under some sort of a military dictatorship. Today all those nations have fragile democracies, imperfect, certainly not totally cast in the image of democracy that we have in the United States, but represented I think by a determination that was manifested in one of those voting lines in the 1980's, when one woman who had been ordered by the FMLN Communists not to go to the polls that day was standing in a voting line with a bullet wound in her shoulder and was asked by one of the reporters if she was not going to leave the line and she said ''no''. Essentially she said ''We fought for a long time to get to this point, I'm going to vote.'' And they had a great turnout that year.

Jose Duarte remained the leader of El Salvador and, because of the steadfastness of Ronald Reagan a lot of his supporters and guys like Bill Blakemore of Texas, who was a real leader of the business community, we have a chance for real democracy in our own hemisphere.

Let me say just a word, Mr. Speaker, about my great friend Bob Dornan. There will never be another one like him. He was of great value to this House, and I think there is a good chance he will be of great value to this House again. I am just reminded when they had the incident in Somalia and those Americans were killed, Bob Dornan was the only Member of the National Security Committee who went over, flew that long distance, some 40 hours in the air, to Somalia, went over the event in detail, and came back and contacted the family of every member of that Ranger unit who were killed in that debacle.

That was Bob Dornan. A heart as big as all outdoors, a keen intellect, a great ability to speak. He has still got it. Obviously we have heard from him across the airwaves lately, but I just wanted to say that Bob Dornan was a great, great asset to the National Security Committee, flew all of the aircraft, knew all of the countries with whom we had treaty relations and knew what the treaty relations were and was a real expert in national security. God bless you, Bob. I hope to see you back soon.

MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KINGSTON. Before he leaves the Chamber, I want to say to the gentleman from California that many, many Members and in fact I am sure most Members of this Chamber agree with him in his comments about Representative, the Honorable Bob Dornan, because he was such a viable part of this body for many years. He is an extremely dedicated patriotic American of great intellect and energy, and I hope that the years are as good to me as they have been to Bob Dornan in terms of getting the job done.

Mr. Speaker, tonight is the eve of the trustees report on Medicare. Each year

the trustees who are appointed, three of them by the President of the United States, give a state of affairs on Medicare, how it is doing, how much money it is bringing in, how many people are participating, what works and what does not work. We all remember on April 3, 1995, when those Clinton-appointed Medicare trustees gave us the very sad news that Medicare was going broke and if we did not act and act quickly to protect and preserve Medicare, that it would not be there for our grandparents and for future generations.

I think what the Republican Party has tried to do since April 1995 is work to solve Medicare on a bipartisan basis, because, Mr. Speaker, my mother and dad depend on it. My great grandmother depends on it. My wife depends on it. My wife's grandmother depends on it. It is something we believe deeply as Americans that we need to protect and preserve.

I have tonight joining me in this special order the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MILLER], who has led that fight. The gentleman from Florida [Mr. MILLER] has, and he may have the need to correct me, more seniors in his district than any other district in the United States of America. It is not only very personal with him, but it is certainly political. So he has had to do everything he can to help it.

I am going to yield the floor to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MILLER], but before I do I want to also say that I have the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF] with us, who is part of the freshman class in the 104th Congress who also has worked very closely and very energetically to protect Medicare. The gentleman from California [Mr. HUNTER] is welcome to join us if he chooses to.

Let me yield to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MILLER]. Tomorrow we get the report. What is it going to tell us?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. The Medicare report is probably going to tell us essentially the same thing we have been hearing the past couple of years, that Medicare is going to be bankrupt in 4 more years. This report coming out from the administration includes people like the Secretary of HHS, Donna Shalala, the Secretary of Treasury, Robert Rubin, the Secretary of Labor, which we do not have one right now, and few other appointees. It is not in dispute what the facts are going to be in the report. The report is going to say that Medicare is going to be bankrupt sometime probably in 2002. That is only 4 years away. It may be a couple of months different from what it was last year, but the bottom line is Medicare part A is going to be totally out of money, because we started back in 1995 where the money flowing into the Medicare part A fund is less than the amount of money going out. Up until 1995, we had more money flowing in from the payroll tax, that is how we fund the Medicare part A program, we had more money going in than going out. It changed in 1995 and all the reserves will be totally exhausted by 2002.

The gentleman is right. My congressional district in Florida is a beautiful area, southwest Florida, with lots of senior citizens. It has more senior citizens than any congressional district in the country. It is important for the people in my district because of the seniors in the district. It is important as a jobs issue. My economy is very dependent on Medicare because I have got more hospitals and doctors and nursing homes and home health agencies that employ people. That is the largest employer in my district. So it is a jobs issue. It is not just for the senior citizens.

Mr. KINGSTON. If the gentleman will yield, it is a jobs issue, but also as part of it, there are some inefficiencies in there and one of the results of that inefficiency is that Medicare inflation has been around 11 percent. Regular medical inflation has been in the 4 to 6 percent range, depending on the year and so forth.

Would the gentleman care to comment on that?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. What we find is that in the private sector, we found health care costs really being very manageable the past several years. Actually for larger businesses with over 100 employees, health care costs have even been going down for some of these companies. So what we should do is let us look at what the private sector is doing. That has been true in everything. Just look at what the private sector is doing and apply it to Medicare.

Mr. KINGSTON. Is the gentleman meaning to tell me that Ford Motor Co. or IBM or Wal-Mart, their health care has not been going up as much as Government-run health care?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. In some years it has been going down. That is how successful they have been to help control costs. Under the Medicare plan that we are proposing, this is a bipartisan issue as the gentleman said. This is something that we have got to work together with the Democrats and Republicans, because the Democrats, despite what they said during the campaign last year, are just as committed as we are to save this program. We have got to save it. We have got to work together. Actually I have to commend the President. He has moved in our direction since the election, despite all the rhetoric last fall. Hopefully we are going to be able to work out something together. It is something that is absolutely essential to this country and we need to work together.

But the gentleman is right. Big companies have actually had their costs go down for some years. What they have done is give people choices, instead of having one size fits all as we have in Medicare. Medicare is not a great program. My mother is on Medicare. She is 87 years old, in a nursing home. It is very important obviously to my mother. But it is very complicated. She has to have a part A program, she has to have a part B program and she has to have a supplemental and it still does not pay that much. It does not pay any drug coverage.

Mr. KINGSTON. Would the gentleman care to describe those briefly?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Of course Medicare part A is paid for by payroll tax. That is the part that is going bankrupt. The part A program pays hospitalization costs. When you go in the hospital, that is what it pays for is the doctor, the surgeon, the hospital bills. There is some nursing home coverage and a little bit of home health coverage there. Part B is outpatient coverage. Part B pays for home health and doctor bills. But part B unlike part A is paid mainly out of the Federal treasury. Twenty-five percent of it is paid by the senior citizens, about $46 a month. Whereas the other 75 percent comes right out of our Federal treasury. No one pays a penny into it. It is a pay-as-you-go type plan.

Supplemental, the senior citizens pay the full costs of it. They have a choice of about 10 plans. They pick the one they want. If they want a Cadillac plan, they pay a very expensive bill. If they want to take a lesser expensive version, they do not have to pay as much. But it is very complicated. No one in the private sector has to live with three insurance plans. Basically you just only have one plan. When I was in the private sector I had one plan. As a Federal employee I have one plan. That is the way it works. But not for senior citizens. We have created this very difficult plan. The benefits are not even that great sometimes. As I say, most of them do not get drug coverage. They do not have all the choices they want. It is a very paperwork, bureaucratic type plan. Everybody has been afraid to talk about Medicare. But the one thing right now at stake, we brought up the issue 2 years ago when the trustees' report came out, is this is something we have got to work together on. It is not sustainable continuing to grow at 10, 11, 12 percent a year. It is going bankrupt. Looking at the numbers, going further off into the future, it is even worse.

We have a two-part problem here, a short-term problem and a long-term problem. The short-term problem is bankrupt in 4 years, so we have got to act now. We have got to act this year, with the President, with the Democrats and Republicans, we have got to have a plan that saves it at least to 2010.

Then we have a long-term problem, and that is what I call the 2010 problem. 2010 is 65 years after the end of World War II. That is when the baby boomers were born, right at the end of World War II, so starting in the late 1940's. Those people are going to start retiring in 2010. The demographics really explode starting then. That is, the number of retirees is going to increase

very fast, from 2010 on. And the number of people working to support them on Medicare is going to be going down. So we are going to have fewer people working, paying payroll taxes to support retirees after 2010.

Mr. KINGSTON. What the gentleman is saying is it is our jobs working with the Medicare trustees on a bipartisan basis to act like fiduciaries and protect and preserve Medicare not just for the next election, not just for the term of our tenure in public office but for the next generations, so that it will be there tomorrow.

As I understand the gentleman, the private sector health care inflation has been flat largely because the private sector has gotten out there and looked at different types of delivery systems, different alternatives. In our Medicare plan, we had some options for seniors. If you want to stay in traditional Medicare, you may, it is no problem if you want to just continue. In fact, if you do not elect to take an option you are automatically enrolled in traditional Medicare. But if you want a managed care plan, because as the gentleman has pointed out, it could give you free prescription drugs as part of the monthly premium. If you want a medical savings account, which is a deductible type plan, you could take that. At one time I know we talked about enrolling in the Federal employee health care plan or something like that, very close to it. Another option I remember was if you are, say, a retiree of General Motors and as part of your job description, your perk, if you will, was to be covered under health care the rest of your life, you could just elect that and not participate in any kind of Government-offered health care. In giving seniors these choices, which are the same choices, Mr. Speaker, that everybody has in America today and frankly I think I would like to upgrade my mother from a 1964 Blue Cross/Blue Shield plan. I do not expect her to drive the same 1964 Chevrolet Biscayne that we had, actually a Ford Falcon, so why should she be confined by the same health care policy? Let us let seniors get the benefits of the 1990s. But by offering those things, we can bring down medical inflation as respects Medicare and not cut Medicare one dime. In fact, I remember last year, and the gentleman can correct me, but approximately the numbers were $190 billion, increased to $270 billion, which is not a cut even if you do live at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. We are going to spend more money every year per person on Medicare. Medicare spending is going to go up every year. It is just that we need to slow down the rate of growth in spending, slow it down just a little bit but spend more money every year. As the gentleman said earlier, we need to look at this waste and fraud. Because when you have a government bureaucracy, there is so much waste. When I have town meetings and I have seniors talk about the waste in the system, there are some absolutely amazing stories. One of the stories, and actually this was covered, by the way. The Tom Brokaw news people had TV cameras at this town meeting.

□ 2030

And a lady stood up. It was in a mobile home park in Palmetto, Florida, and explained about, you know, this is a classic one of waste and fraud. It is she got a bill from the hospital. She had been in the hospital, and she was billed for her own autopsy, and so she calls up the hospital and said, ''You know, you did not do an autopsy on me, I'm still alive,'' and tried to explain to him that, you know, you cannot do an autopsy, I am still alive, and they came back and the hospital:

''Well, let me check the records first''; then came back and said ''Oh, I'm sorry. That was a mistake. We did an EKG on you.''

And she said, ''You didn't do one of those either.''

And so it is amazing the number of little mistakes like that. I mean that was, might have been a billing-type mistake.

Mr. KINGSTON. You know, though, I hear this in our town meetings on Medicare with seniors all the time is that the fraud and abuse, the sloppiness in billing is just unbelievable.

My dad has diabetes, and he has macular degeneration, so he is legally blind. You know, diabetics have to check their blood sugar level all the time, and so in the condominium complex that he lives in Athens, GA the seniors all kind of help each other out. So one of his things is he gives advice to lots of his neighbors, and he says over and over again somebody goes to the doctor, the hospital, on Medicare for a head cold, they are billed for x-rays or whatever, it is just. And you do not know.

There is another story of a woman just outside of Brunswick, GA, who instead of going to have stitches removed in Brunswick, the ambulance drove her to Jacksonville because it is legal under Medicare, and the Jacksonville trip allowed the ambulance company to charge $1,200 whereas, had they just gone to Brunswick, it would have only been $200 or $300.

So legally they can be very, very aggressive on their delivery service just to get the higher amount. You never see that in the private sector. That was one of the reasons that health care inflation skyrocketed in the 1980's, but in the private sector, companies started getting aggressive about it and they brought that down.

Now the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SCHAFFER] is here, and I know he is a freshman. He has already expressed interest in working on Medicare, and he has been waiting for tomorrow and the trustees' report, too.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Well, thank you very much for yielding. This is truly a critical issue for us, and this report that is coming out tomorrow is a landmark report that I think the American public ought to pay close attention to, and we expect that we will mirror closely the last trustees' report that was released, and this notion of the bipartisan aspect of our concern about Medicare and our need to save and preserve the Medicare program is a very real aspect of our deliberation. And when you start with the very basis of the debate that exists on Medicare, I think you see that.

This report is not a Republican report. In fact it is not really a Democrat report, although the trustees, the Medicare trust fund, are appointees of our President, Bill Clinton, and please help me with some of these names, Robert Reich, the Labor Secretary; it includes Donna Shalala as well. Maybe you can help me. Who else?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Robert Rubin, Secretary of Treasury, and the head of the Social Security Administration is on that. There is about 8 or 9, I think, total.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. You know, and if you think about how many debates we have here where the basis for the debate is often the subject of disagreement on this particular issue, there is no denying, from either party or anybody involved, that this Medicare program is undeniably going to go bankrupt within 4 years. In fact, it is a fact that the Medicare program spends approximately $40 million every day. Every day; that is something that is very difficult for people to fathom, but I have to say, and I appreciate the chance to participate in this discussion tonight because when I, as a new Member here in Washington, have been on the job for about 4 months and running for Congress was an eye-opening experience for me. My grandmother, who lives out in Colorado Springs, told me; she said whatever you do back there in Washington, you have to save the Medicare program, and I assured her that we would, that that is our goal and our objective and that we would do whatever it takes to accomplish that.

And you mentioned a few minutes earlier just about we certainly have the financial side of maintaining solvency of the fund. But there is also the behavioral side of Medicare itself, and what I mean by that is we have to change the system in a way that restores the patient-physician relationship that we once had; this whole notion of a government third-party payer that will pay the bills with little questions asked, in many cases, causes, for a significant amount of fraud in many cases, for overtreatment and other examples of where questions that are just not asked as a consumer would perhaps. And you know the Medicare Plus program that the Republicans had proposed 2 years ago and was eventually thwarted here in Washington involved those very opportunities for patients to have choice within the Medicare program and to be treated like real customers, real consumers of health care

to provide the consumer-driven accountability that you have in so many private aspects as well.

So certainly we have to look at the financial side of increasing spending at a responsible rate so that we do not bankrupt the program as others have proposed to increase more than that; in fact, drain the account and result in ultimate bankruptcy, but we also have to look at the behavioral reforms to the program that allow us to be treated like real customers, like real consumers, and to restore that relationship which is so vital in the health care delivery system.

Mr. KINGSTON. Well, the gentleman who has worked so hard on it, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MILLER] do you believe you had mentioned that the President is a lot closer now? It is not an election year, we do not hear the demagoguery. Are we in the United States Congress going to put our seniors first this year, get a bill passed in the House and Senate and signed by the President?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Well, I certainly hope so. We have to. I mean 4 years is not very long. I mean when we started this, it was 7 years before bankruptcy. Now it is just 4 years. So we have to do something, the President realizes it. And you know what we are hearing is that he wants to work out an agreement.

You know, one thing has been interesting in the past few weeks back in my district and even up here: some of the frustrations with the bureaucracy. Let me tell you a couple of the situations, and that is what people get mad about with Medicare because it is, you know, the big bureaucracy in Washington makes the decisions, and these doctors are just saying they have never had it worse in Medicare. I mean they are getting more letters saying denied, denied, denied, and then the doctor just has to spend all this effort documenting why he did this procedure. And they said, ''I'm all ready to give up on the whole thing.'' I mean there are some doctors that are more senior. They are saying, ''Hey, I'm not ready to quit the whole practice of medicine. I cannot tolerate it any more.''

Give you one other illustration. I had the deans of the medical schools in the State of Florida. We have, I think, four or five medical schools in the State all came to see me one day; the dean of the University of Florida, the University of South Florida, University of Miami and Nova actually.

Mr. KINGSTON. Were their any Gators in the room? I am a Georgia Bulldog.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. I am a Gator now.

Mr. KINGSTON. And the Seminoles, but the Gators, you are really pushing it even in the name of grandma.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. When I was in Florida the guy named Dooley that was there coaching, and we were not too fond of him, but now we like our plan. You know, Super Steve was playing when I was there, and so now he has brought us to great fame.

But it was the frustration of the deans of the medical school because Medicare had come up with a ruling that was a retroactive ruling of how they are going to pay for medical school residents.

Now I do not necessarily disagree with the details of what they are talking about doing, but the problem is they are going to go retroactive back to 1992 or so. That was it could bankrupt our medical schools; it was unbelievable. I hate anything retroactive. We have retroactive death taxes here, a couple of years ago President Clinton's bill, but the thing is when you go retroactive, and they feel so helpless down there, the deans of the medical schools; we cannot afford these millions of dollars retroactively. We have got to pay back.

If you are going to change the policy, fine, change it, give us the right notice. We will work under whatever rules Washington's bureaucracy decides. And that is the problem. One size fits all, whether it is my local. The dermatologists in the State of Florida have had a certain procedure on treating skin cancer. Well, maybe there is an abuse of it by Medicare, but only in the State of Florida. So the State of Florida Blue Cross in effect banned it for all the doctors, and the dermatologists are saying wait a minute; you know, you could do it in Arizona, you can do it in Georgia, but the dermatologists now across the board, all of them, cannot use this procedure unless you have got great documentation. I mean it is unbelievable.

You know, there was an abuse, but when you have a government-run system, one size fits all, you set it up to try to figure a way around the system.

Mr. KINGSTON. Well, it is interesting. You mentioned that a friend of mine sells bandages to Medicare suppliers, and it is kind of a cross between the regular bandage and a gauze bandage, and it is more sophisticated than an ordinary bandage but is no big deal. He says that they can be made for $3. Under Medicare you can legally bill up to $29 on there.

So he comes to a town meeting, and he and I make a big deal about this bandage, and I show it up, and, you know, of course it is the kind of poster child you look for; you know, public officials and so forth. And so I showed it. The only time he has ever been audited by the Federal Government was after he put this, after he basically blew the whistle on this crazy bandage.

And it is the same thing, only the government would come up with such weird rules and regulations and then appear to be a little bit punitive when somebody blows the whistle on it, and I hope that it works out.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. I mean, as you were saying, the gentleman from Colorado, somebody, you got to be concerned about the patient-doctor relationship, and I mean just kind of like the dermatologist situation in Florida. For all the dermatologists in Florida, only Florida, they came up with a new set of rules, and that, you know, says I mean maybe there is a problem there, but, you know, to come up with a blanket rule is interfering with that patient-doctor relationship, and there is a great deal of frustration, more frustration with our doctors and my doctors in my area than I have seen in my 4 years here in Congress talking about that issue so. And it is the bureaucracy, and they say, oh well, we have got to save money, and so there is a problem here. We will write some new rules. Well, you know that is what we need to do is open up the marketplace.

You know one of the options we have talked about by the way in the bill last year, and hopefully it will be included in it this time around, is something called provider service organizations, which is really a great opportunity for local communities to provide their own health care. Most people get their health care in the local community, and what we want to do is give the opportunity for the local hospital and doctors to go together and offer a package or plan to the seniors.

Now insurance companies are not too keen on this, admittedly, but the hospitals and doctors say, hey, we can compete with them because they feel frustrated that the Blue Cross or Travelers are going to beat up on them. What we want to do is, hey, if Sarasota Hospital and their doctors want to do one, if Savannah Memorial Hospital or whatever the name of the hospital is in Savannah, wants to get together with their doctors and offer one, if they want to get together in Denver or whatever city and let the doctor and hospital work together to compete with a Blue Cross plan or a Travelers plan or the traditional Medicare, which, you know, should continue, that is the type of pressures that will give flexibility to a system, market pressures, just what is happening in the private sector can really slow down the rate of growth in spending because we are going to spend more money in the system as long as the amount of money is still growing. I think we can preserve and protect it and save it for our seniors and strengthen it at the same time, because we need to strengthen Medicare not just for the long term.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. If the gentleman will yield, you know the strengthening is precisely how we pay for our program to maintain the solvency of the Medicare trust fund, and the programming, the $30 bandage example, is one that I hear a lot, not bandages per se in my town meetings, but I hear a lot of examples just like that. And what I hope people will realize is that those kinds of occasions that occur every day in America in fact rob and steal medical opportunities for the millions of Americans who receive health care and benefits through the Medicare Program. And without a doubt, these different options and examples that you mention of various

service delivery systems and networks that we would hope recipients would be able to choose among and be a part would end the example of the $30 bandage, will put an end to the example of the $200 splinter removal, as I had heard out in Colorado, examples like this that you just routinely hear, and it is just remarkable.

I would like you, though, to speak to just one more time. I do not think we can say it often enough that our plan actually envisions spending more money per recipient over the next 5 to 6 years than certainly what we are spending today. Many people think that the only way you can save Medicare is to somehow cut spending or cut funding for the program. We are not talking about that at all. In fact, we are talking about increasing the per-capita benefit to somewhere around $6,700 per recipient. Today I think we are around $5,000 per recipient, somewhere around that neighborhood.

But by increasing the spending at a responsible rate and at the same time putting the patients and giving them some real incentive in the accountability side of this delivery system, that is how we are going to save the program, that is how we are going to maintain solvency, and hopefully that is what is going to ultimately earn the bipartisan support here in the House and the Senate and over at the President's office as well to sign Medicare reform in a program that will save the program.

Mr. KINGSTON. It is too bad that in Washington you can always demagog out of fear and you can get reelected through race-baiting or scaring seniors or saying that children are going to be starved on the streets. It is an old tactic.

Last year, before the gentleman was here, Haley Barbour, the chairman of the Republican Committee, offered $1 million to any Democrat or any person who could show where Medicare was being cut in the bill. Now do you not know the pressure that partisans were under to try to prove that the Republicans were, in fact, cutting Medicare? I mean they would have loved to collect that million dollars because in addition to being millionaires, they could have been heroes, huge heroes.

Not one person was able to do that. Medicare was not cut. Yet unfortunately, in Washington we have a few demagogs who like to scare seniors and so forth, but the gentleman has raised a good point. Per recipient, it went from approximately 5,200 to about 7,100, and we are going to continue to work, and the doors are wide open in the discussions and the dialogs and the committee rooms. Democrats and Republicans, come on in, let us do what is responsible. Tomorrow we will get the report, and we are going to have to continue addressing this.

□ 2045

One of the things we need in Medicare policy is common sense. One of the things that we have tried since we have become the majority of Congress is bring common sense, Republican, American ideas to the streets of America. Common sense is at a premium in Washington. It is just such a scarcity.

But the gentleman from Washington [Mr. JACK METCALF] is one of the Members who has been working very, very hard in the Housing Opportunity Caucus to make homeownership and that part of the American dream real to millions of more Americans than have houses right now. So I am proud to yield to the gentleman from Washington [Mr. METCALF].

Mr. METCALF. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely critical to protect and preserve Medicare. We cannot allow it to continue toward bankruptcy. It will be very difficult, but I will tell you, we will succeed in keeping Medicare so people can stay in their own homes.

Homeownership is something I am critically interested in. I will briefly comment on this as related to Medicare. Very important, really critical, and that is homeownership.

As chairman of the Republican Opportunity Caucus, I can sincerely speak on one of the most important issues facing our Nation, the ability of our people to realize the American dream and participate in one of our greatest opportunities, homeownership, and the right of the Medicare recipients to stay as long as possible in their own homes.

While there is no magic silver bullet in finding ways to increase homeownership, we can find solutions by working together. In some cases, Federal programs such as the low income housing tax credit, FHA, HUD or the Federal Home Loan Bank have been the catalyst for developing homeownership.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, these important programs I have mentioned, and important ownership encouragements, such as maintaining the home mortgage deduction, have brought people from renting to owning, fulfilling the dream of so many Americans.

Not only does homeownership benefit the individual home buyer, but the spin-off of the home building industry is the catalyst for our national economy. Rightly so, new housing starts are always one of the first indicators we look for in an ever-growing and expanding economy.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican Housing Opportunity Caucus is committed to identifying models that work for housing and homeownership. It is often the case that partnerships fostered between nonprofit organizations, lenders, government and builders are needed to solve the ownership problem. This is the goal of our caucus.

The mission of this caucus is to give Members of Congress, who are interested in housing policies, an opportunity to discuss their concerns and coordinate a response. A symposium that we will soon sponsor will bring in people with hands-on experience in providing affordable housing. We want their ideas and creative suggestions to implement and expand homeownership, especially for first-time home buyers.

Housing is not just a roof over your head but a place you can call home, a place you own. Thus far, over 30 of my colleagues have joined this caucus. We remain committed to expanding homeownership and opportunities for everyone, and protecting Medicare so seniors, like me, can stay in their homes as long as possible.

I personally invite Members to join the caucus and look forward to working together to find solutions that will expand homeownership and fulfill the homeownership American dream.

Mr. KINGSTON. I thank the gentleman for discussing what he is up to in the homeownership conference, because another thing that will bring about homeownership, as much as anything else, is balancing the budget, and we are going to be talking about that, because, as the gentleman knows, Alan Greenspan has said that balancing the budget could reduce interest rates on home mortgages as much as 2 percent, and that would be significant towards everybody participating in the American dream.

There are a lot of quirky things that we are trying to bring common sense policy to. One of them is in the subject of sugar, and, Mr. Speaker, we are not going to get back to the Hershey's bipartisan hugs and kisses dialogue when we talk about sugar. But the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MILLER] has a program that eliminates the sugar program. So I wanted to yield to him and ask him what is the sugar program and why should we eliminate it?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. I thank the gentleman.

Last year we worked very hard, and the gentleman worked very closely with me and with the gentleman from New York [Mr. SCHUMER], a Democrat, to do away with the sugar program. We are going to try to have a 5-year phase-out.

I look at the sugar program as one of the most egregious examples of corporate welfare that we have here in Washington. Anybody who believes in reducing the size and scope of government has to believe in getting rid of this program, phasing out this program, because the sugar program is big government at its worst.

What the sugar program does is it is a cartel. I think the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARMEY] says it is the worst cartel we have had since OPEC. It is the cartel that controls the amount of sugar available in the United States, and it does this by restricting imports in such that the price of sugar is kept almost at twice the world price. If the world price is 12 or 13 cents, in the United States we pay 22 or 23 cents a pound for sugar. It costs the American consumer $1.4 billion a year.

Mr. KINGSTON. Let me ask the gentleman, it costs the American consumers the difference in the world price versus the domestic price, but does it cost you in taxes?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. It costs in several areas in taxes. Because, first of all, the American consumer is the American taxpayer. So I am not sure of the distinction. When the American consumer pays $1.4 billion more for sugar than they need to, it costs the American taxpayer, too.

But it costs the taxpayer in other ways we don't realize. For example the sugar program is bad for the environment. It really is bad for the Everglades. There was an editorial in the New York Times on Sunday talking about the Everglades problem and sugar's contribution to it.

Now sugar is not the only problem to the Everglades. It is a major contributor to the destruction of the Everglades and the Florida Bay. The problem with it, for example, is to solve the Everglades problem, part of the solution is to buy 100,000 acres of land in the Everglades' agricultural area. Last year, we put $2 million in the farm bill to help buy that land.

We are going to buy 100,000 acres, most of it in sugar, but because of the sugar program, we are going to pay an inflated price for the land. It is going to cost us probably $100 million more to buy this land from the sugar farmers because of the sugar program. It is crazy.

Mr. KINGSTON. Because the Government is the reason that land is higher, and yet the Government is going to pay the higher cost, which it costs.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Right. That is what makes it so crazy is that we are, in effect, subsidizing sugar again; we are buying that land.

Another little interesting subsidy about the sugar program is we cannot grow enough sugar in the United States to satisfy demands, so there is no choice about the fact whether we do not import or not. We have to import sugar.

Mr. KINGSTON. Is it not true that we import 100 percent or 99 percent of our tea, which is true, we do not grow tea domestically? Many people have said we have to preserve the American supplier because we cannot be dependent. But I think the reality is the dependency is overseas to those markets to make sure that America continues to buy their sugar.

So to say that there is going to be a sugar shortage because of the change in the sugar domestic policy is ridiculous because we never had a tea shortage, or at least none in recent memory that I can recall.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. We have to be proud of American agriculture. It is the most efficient and productive in the world. We are the major exporter of agriculture products. I do not know the number, but that is one of our largest trade surpluses we have.

I have a lot of citrus in the State of Florida, of course. We cannot consume all of the citrus we grow in the State of Florida. We have to export. Tropicana is my largest employer in my district. Twenty-eight percent of the juice they produce there in my area goes outside the United States. Fifty percent of the fresh grapefruits in the State of Florida are shipped outside the United States.

So we have to export some products and some products we have to import. I mean, that is just a fact. Sugar, we just do not have the land.

Mr. KINGSTON. Let me ask my colleague on the subject of imports, so not only are we subsidizing large, corporate American sugar growers, but we are also, if I hear the gentleman correct, subsidizing foreign sugar growers; is that correct?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. That is right.

Mr. KINGSTON. And then let me ask the gentleman this question, are there non-American citizens participating in the sugar program, and are they getting paid to do that?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. The gentleman asked a couple questions. One is, one reason we call it corporate welfare is that there are at least 33 farms that benefit by a million dollars a year. Most of the benefits go to big sugar farmers, sugar plantations in the State of Florida. The largest one, as a matter of fact, is controlled by a family who are not U.S. citizens.

But the interesting point on this, and it really makes me bothered by this whole thing about importing sugar, Australia has a free market for sugar. We should be able to compete with Australia. They sell sugar to anybody in the world 12 or 13 cents a pound, but not to the United States. We do not want to pay 12 or 13 cents. We insist on paying the full price; the United States insists on 22 or 23 cents a pound.

Mr. KINGSTON. Even though we can get it for about half that price.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Not just half price, but, no, we insist we will pay our price for it whether it is coming from the Dominican Republic or what have you.

This is a bad jobs issue, too. The sugar program is killing jobs in the United States. Let me give a couple of illustrations.

First of all, we have sugar refineries that are going out of business. We have closed 40 percent of the sugar refinery production in the United States since this sugar program came into existence in 1981, 40 percent. These are good-paying jobs.

I had a press conference last week, and I had these members of the AFL–CIO surrounding me coming down from New York City and Baltimore saying, ''Hey, we are going to lose our jobs, this is my career, and we are going to have to shut down because there is not enough sugar in the United States to keep these mills open.''

But the other issue why we are losing jobs is, because of the high price of sugar, we are driving jobs outside the United States. Canada. Canada, you can buy sugar for about half the price that we do here.

Why would a candy company that uses a lot of sugar continue producing in the United States when they could shift the production to Canada, produce the candy there and send it back to the United States? And that is exactly what is happening.

Mr. KINGSTON. In fact, there is a candy cane company in Georgia who tells me that the biggest competitor is not in the candy cane business, the biggest competitor is the U.S. Government, who makes it so that they have to buy sugar at an inflated price, and because of that, Canadian candy cane manufacturers can come in there. And he can beat the Canadian candy cane manufacturer any day of the week on a one-on-one basis, but when the Government is also on the team of the Canadian folks, the American guy loses.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Right. It is just not fair. We should be proud of a lot we did with this farm bill last year. We made some historic changes with farm programs that went back all the way to the 1930s. It was a really historic change.

Unfortunately, the only program that was not changed, basically, was sugar. All the other products, whether it is peanuts or dairy, had some really major changes. But not sugar. And it was unfortunate.

So, hopefully, we are going to continue to address that issue in this Congress and see some results, maybe.

Mr. KINGSTON. The interesting thing about the sugar program is that changes in compromises transitioning the sugar program to a free market program and protecting whatever very small farmers are out there. But as was said, most of the bulk of it, the benefits go to the large corporate farmers anyhow, but giving the programs the benefit of the doubt, compromises were offered. They were all rejected.

The Miller-Schumer bill, which the gentleman has introduced, actually eliminates the programs and takes the American consumer out from the shackles of a Government cartel.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. It was actually the Miller-Schumer-Kingston bill last year. Right. It was a 5-year phase-out. So it was not something that was going to happen immediately. I am a big believer that we need to phase these programs out so we do not really punish people unfairly on this.

We have to be fair to the American consumer, who is the American taxpayer. We are losing these jobs. It is just not the right way of having a big government program. It no longer needs to continue to exist in this country.

Mr. KINGSTON. It is interesting as we look at these things. I want to talk to the gentleman about the budget. When he says the taxpayers are paying, one of the things that they have to pay for is the administration of this ridiculous program.

Another thing taxpayers are paying for is AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps takes kids who are volunteering and pays them. Now it is interesting. The President has this volunteer summit going

on this week in Washington. And Americans are great volunteers. I believe the statistic that I read, 90 million Americans volunteer 4 hours a week each and every week, and that includes people who make and bill out $4 or $5 an hour to people would bill out $300 or $400 an hour.

Everyone likes to volunteer in America and participate, and it is one of the great things about our country. Yet, the President's main program has been to take young children and start paying them to do what their older brothers and sisters and parents have been volunteering to do.

Now the cost for that and the President's justification is that it is an idea to get them interested in participating; it helps them with student loans and so forth. And yet, the cost per student is $26,000, Mr. Speaker, for volunteers; and the student only gets $1,500 of that. Where is the difference? The bureaucracy.

□ 2100

Once again, we have a program that is doing nothing but growing the bureaucracy. So the Congress goes Republican, the Republicans go in there and say, let us audit AmeriCorps and see how it is that the program that pays volunteers $1,500 costs $26,000 per volunteer. We found, after ordering this audit, that the books were in such bad shape that they could not be audited. Our budget is full of ridiculous and archaic things like that. As the President stands in the well of the House of Representatives and says, the era of big government is over with, in fact, his budget insists on increasing the size of big government.

Let me show the gentleman this chart, Mr. Speaker. This is the Clinton budget which he says will reduce spending and balance the budget by the year 2002. In fact, in the year 2002, the Clinton budget proposal has a $69 billion deficit.

Now, if we say an increase in Medicare is a cut, maybe we can call a $69 billion deficit an even budget, I don't know, a zero balance. But it is not true.

Here is what is even worse than that, 98 percent of the deficit reduction in the Clinton budget comes within the last 2 years. That is the equivalent of me saying I am going to lose 30 pounds over the next 10 months, and not losing anything for the first 9 months and then that last month go on a starvation diet, like anybody thinks I am going to make the goal. It does not even happen.

Then, in the year 1998, which is a year away, it increases the deficit by $24 billion compared to not even passing his budget. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, we cannot be playing games like this. The time has come to balance the budget.

My friend, Michael Quido, who is an evangelist, I do not know if the gentleman gets him in Florida or not, tells the story about a frog that got caught in the road, got caught in a pothole in the road. People in Florida have all of these sink holes, so they can identify with this. The frog gets caught, his buddy frog comes over there and tries to pull him out. He pulls and pulls and pulls and cannot get the frog out of the pothole.

So his buddy says: I will try to come back to get you tomorrow. Just hang in there. So he goes back home and has dinner, a couple of flies and grub worms with the family. The next thing you know, the frog that was in the road caught in the pothole comes through the door. He said, how did you get out of the pothole? We tried and tried and tried and we could not get you out of the pothole. How did you get out? He said: When you were trying I just wanted to get out because I knew I needed to get out. But after you left a truck was coming, and I had to get out.

Now, that is the position of the U.S. Congress right now. We are stuck in the pothole. We would like to balance the budget, but in reality, we can go home and tell everybody it is somebody else's problem. We can portray ourselves as a solution and say that we really cannot do it now, but we are trying, and we can talk this good game.

The fact is, we cannot defy gravity much longer, Mr. Speaker. It is time to admit a truck is coming down the road to smash all of us politically, nationally, economically. It is time to balance the budget, and it is time to quit fooling around about it.

I know the gentleman from Florida has worked very hard as a member of the Committee on the Budget to try to come up with some programs that the Clinton administration will agree to eliminate and that we can move toward balancing the budget. I know the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH] has worked very hard with the White House since January trying to negotiate. Are my colleagues getting anywhere?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, balancing the budget is very, very hard work. It is not easy, because a lot of the programs are good programs in the government. The problem is whether the Federal Government should really be doing them.

My colleague mentioned AmeriCorps. I am sure there is some good work being done by AmeriCorps ''volunteers'' in this country, and I am sure they can show us some of the programs that they are helping with. And I think we could say, well, that is fine.

The question is, first of all, it is not a volunteer program. I mean, it is a paid-work program. It is a make-work program. And for someone who is a big believer in volunteer work, I never was in politics before and my background is volunteer work. I had my kids volunteer, my wife volunteers, we have done everything. In terms of helping with arts organizations or mental health organizations or day care programs, we are strong supporters of helping the community. That is what makes the backbone of a great community where we live now.

So I am a big believer in volunteer work. But when you get paid, that is a job. So let us stop calling AmeriCorps a volunteer program. It is a jobs program.

Why do we need a new jobs program? We want to have college kids; well, let us help work study. That is a good program. It helps kids work for the university or do different jobs and get paid for it. But it is a jobs program. So it really bothers me when you say it is volunteer. Oh, well, we have a volunteer army. It is volunteer to get in, but one is a paid soldier, and it is a career when one gets in. So we have to differentiate. But we can go program after program; and sitting on the Committee on Appropriations as we both do, we have to make these tough choices. They are not always bad programs, someone is always there to defend them.

But I am more optimistic now. We start with the ideas, the rhetoric is very different. When we first came here in 1993, talking about balancing the budget was not talked about. We were the only ones talking about it. We were just talking on this side of the aisle. At least now, everybody is talking about it, assuming we are going to balance the budget in the year 2002. So at least we are starting with the premise that we are going to reach a goal. That was not true 4 years ago, so we have come a long way. Unfortunately, I am not sure the facts will back up the rhetoric. The rhetoric is there, but at least we have accomplished the rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, the negotiations are going on, as the gentleman said, between Senator DOMENICI and the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. KASICH, from the House Committee on the Budget. We are at a critical juncture right now because, if we cannot get something to work with the administration on, we are going to have to proceed on our own to present a budget. We are prepared to move very quickly, because time is running out. I mean our fiscal year ends on September 30, so we have to have a budget and get moving on the appropriation process and all that.

The President said he presented a balanced budget. And as the gentleman said, it is smoke and mirrors, and the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH] uses phrase, it gives smoke and mirrors a bad name because of the games they played with the issue.

But there are serious negotiations going on. I think it is very difficult for the President, Dick Morris' theory, and the triangulation is separating us from the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. If he is willing to sacrifice the liberal wing, the party who say they are for a balanced budget, but I do not think really mean it, we have a chance to get a deal.

Mr. KINGSTON. Let me ask the gentleman, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH] has been negotiating with the

White House in good faith since January. And his analogy is, it is like selling a house to somebody. They say I like your floor plan, I like your shrubbery, I like your neighborhood, I like your price, but they keep coming and coming with everything but a contract. At this point, my colleague says it is time to fish or cut bait, and they are not doing that.

So here is my question. Say the White House is up to its usual tricks and they will say one thing publicly but behind the scenes not agree to a budget. What do we do in the House? Can we go ahead without a budget and pass our appropriations bills and avoid a government shutdown, or does Clinton want to have another government shutdown?

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Actually I think the President really wants a balanced budget, but we will see. We are at a critical juncture over the next couple of weeks. We will know whether we can work out an arrangement so that we can have a balanced budget with the President over the next couple of weeks. If we do not, we are going to find the Budget Committee moving very fast forward and presenting the budget that we will vote on here in the House certainly before the Memorial Day break. And then the Committee on Appropriations can move ahead with all 13 of their appropriations bills.

So we had a meeting in the Committee on the Budget this afternoon, and I do not want to be optimistic or pessimistic. We are at a very critical point right now, and we just do not know what we are going to come forward with over the next few days.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, here is a budget that has been proposed from the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. NEUMANN], one of the members of the committee. His budget excludes Social Security revenue and, as the gentleman knows, Mr. Speaker, Social Security is mixed in with the general budget. What his does is actually protect Social Security by putting it on a separate line and then, in addition to balancing the budget by the year 2002, one thing the Neumann budget has that I really think is very important, and I do not think this can be picked up by a camera, Mr. Speaker, but this is a schedule for balancing the budget and zeroing out the national debt. And in the Neumann budget, by the year 2023, my children and grandchildren, your children and grandchildren, can wake up and say the national debt is gone. The $6 trillion national debt, that generation of Americans, can live without having that dark cloud hanging over them.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman mentioned Social Security. Social Security generates approximately $75 billion more in revenue a year than it pays out. So actually, our deficit is worse than we realize, because Social Security is counted in there.

What is really good about the Neumann budget is it takes care of the national debt issue and it gets Social Security on a sound basis.

We have talked about Medicare earlier, we have to talk about Social Security. It does not go bankrupt for another 20 years, so we have a little bit of time. But the fact is it is hiding how bad the deficit is today; $75 billion of our deficit, it should be higher by $75 billion, because Social Security is where that money is.

Mr. KINGSTON. Essentially, when we talk about Social Security, is what seniors are saying, is protect it from general highway appropriations, or AmeriCorps, or the NEA, or whatever the folks want to spend money on; just use the Social Security money only for Social Security. That is what seniors say.

What the younger folks say is, put me in a private program; the existing program is not going to be there when I retire. So the great beauty of this Neumann budget is he calls it a Social Security preservation budget. I call it the grandma and the grandbabies' budget, because it looks at both spectrums of our population, the demographics, which I think is extremely important.

Let me read the gentleman some statistics that were given to me by a man named Pete Davies of Sun City, AZ. It says, prior to 1929 it was a disgrace for an administration to run a deficit. Out of the 140 years between the year 1790 and 1929, there were 87 years in the history of the United States when there was a surplus, and that resulted in a reduction of whatever debt had been out there. There were four periods, from 1801 to 1811, 1922 to 1934, 1879 to 1892, and 1919 to 1929 where the Nation operated for a decade or more with a surplus every year, and that was considered a responsible government. The longest period prior to 1929 in which there was a deficit every year were the 8 years of 1857 to 1864, which included the Civil War. So there was a reason, a viable reason to have a deficit.

Mr. Speaker, the longest period with a deficit without a war was the 5 years of 1846 to 1850. Then of course there was a deficit between 1930 and 1945, 16 years, but that was right after World War I and during World War II.

But during this last period when we have had deficits since 1969, or actually since 1970, 1969 was the last time we had a balanced budget, we have not had a major war, certainly a civil war or of World War II proportions. So it is absolutely time that we got this under control and do what is responsible.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Sun City, AZ. I have a Sun City in my district in Florida.

One thing I think for senior citizens, and I meet with them all the time, most senior citizens, they lived through the Great Depression and World War II. They want to do what is right for this country. In fact, a lot of them resent the fact that most Americans think all seniors want is more, more, more. That is not necessarily true. Some of their organizations that, so called, represent them up here say that, but the seniors back home do not always feel that way.

I had an interesting conversation on the phone last week with a constituent who lives in a very, very large mobile home park, these are not wealthy retirees. This lady was from Indianapolis. He was in fact leaving this Saturday to go back to Indianapolis, 84 years old, lost her husband recently. She is getting this extra money from Social Security. I do not need it. This debt is bad. How can I get my check, give it back, and have it applied to the debt. I do not want to just give it to the government to spend more money.

She wanted to give it back to the government to pay down its debt. I thought that was very noble of her, and I called and we chatted on the phone the other day. That makes me feel so good. They know there is a problem there. They know it is not right for their grandchildren and this country and future generations, they are willing to do their share. I do not need this COLA or this increase, I do not think we should stop that at all. The seniors are willing to do their fair share, they just want to make sure that everybody contributes to it, the farmers and the military, everybody.

Mr. KINGSTON. So are farmers, so are veterans and so are business people. Somehow, Washington does not get the message. Sometimes they get beat around up here, as you do, people come to the office, you have to vote, and you are darned if you do and darned if you do not on an issue.

□ 2115

You go home and you realize that the guy in the morning who wakes up at the crack of dawn, who puts his lunch together and eats it out of a lunch pail, drives maybe 20 miles to work, and comes home late at night after putting in a full day, he is tired, his kids are there and his wife has had a full day at her job, they are not disappointed in the vote that we may have cast because they want a government that works. They just want good, commonsense policies, a balanced budget. They want an American dream they can pass on to their children and grandchildren, they want a good future that they can retire with a health care program that is there and a neighborhood that is safe.

If they can have that, that is what they want. I think what they are asking from you and me as their representatives in Washington is just to do what is right, to do what is good for America. If you do that, do not worry about lobbyists and the big government crowd, and then the day is a good day.

I go home and think about those folks, because often they do not write. Many times they do not have business cards, they do not have titles and so forth, but that is whose interests we really have to look out for. That is who we have to make more of a priority.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Exactly. As Ronald Reagan said, this is a great country filled with good people. There are so many good people, it makes you feel good to be in America. Especially senior citizens, they want to do what is right in this country. They recognize we have problems in this country. They are willing to make their contribution, but as the gentleman says, we have talked to veterans groups. It is not always me, me, me, and that is too bad that some organizations here advocate that.

We are moving in the right direction. The rudder is right, we are all talking about balance the budget, balancing the budget and getting fiscal responsibility back in Washington. Now is a chance, the best chance ever in our lifetimes, to really bring that fiscal sanity back here and get a balanced budget by the year 2002. I am more optimistic today, whether we deal with the administration or we just do it on our own.

Mr. KINGSTON. I am glad to hear that. I thank the gentleman for being with us tonight in this special order.

OUR RIGHT TO SAFETY AND FREEDOM FROM FEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. HULSHOF] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, once again the 32 newly-elected Republican Members of this body have sought a special order of this House to focus on issues that affect the lives of Americans all across this great land.

We have, as Members know, in the past explored positive solutions to problems that affect American communities. We have addressed the issues and concerns of working men and women as they struggle to juggle family commitments along with their careers. We have spoken, I think last week it was, about enacting real tax relief.

Mr. Speaker, tonight we want to train the spotlight of this House and focus on an issue of concern to every man and every woman and every child in this great land. What I am speaking about is the most basic civil right that each of us possesses: the right to be free from fear, the right to be able to drive to a convenience store in safety, the right to take a leisurely stroll through our neighborhoods, holding hands with our spouses, without concern; the right to let our kids play outside in the front yard without having to constantly keep watch over them.

Mr. Speaker, before joining this body after the November election, I worked for a little over 10 years as a criminal prosecutor in the State of Missouri. Along with many hardworking law enforcement officials from our great State, I had the opportunity to work on the front lines, dealing with crime and crime victims. I have cried with family members as they have had to deal with the horrific tragedy visited upon them by some violent criminal. We have held hands as we have waited for the verdict of 12 impartial people.

I have relived with those victims of violent crime some pretty horrific tragedies, like the young father who was murdered in front of his two young children. In one of the most selfless acts that I can think of, he was begging not for his life, not for his own safety, but for the lives of his two kids. Yet his pleas fell on the deaf ears of the murderer, who was ultimately convicted.

Or there were the two juveniles who were on a crime spree, and chose to murder the two security guards that came down to investigate this routine theft. The stories and tragedies across this country are too many to mention. I do not need to mention, Mr. Speaker, how strongly I feel for the victims of violent crime.

Of course, last week we had the opportunity to visit back in our districts and promote National Victims' Rights Week. Fortunately, I think in the last Congress, in earlier Congresses, we have done some things to begin making some inroads, to make sure that victims are equal partners in the criminal justice system along with those who are accused of these heinous crimes.

For instance, in the last Congress, restitution for victims was required in Federal courts. In fact, earlier in this Congress we passed a law to help protect crime victims' rights to attend the trial of their assailants and to provide victim impact testimony, which passed this House by a large, overwhelming number. In fact, I am told that the President has signed that measure into law, and it is now the current law of this land.

We have much work to do, however. What we hope to do, Mr. Speaker, is focus a few minutes this evening on this issue. Particularly, I know that there are members of the Republican freshman class who have been champions in the area of victims' rights. I know there are others of us who wish to speak tonight about a specific problem dealing with drugs in our communities, as well as violent juvenile offenders.

In fact, I see that my friend, the gentleman from New Jersey, joins me here in the well of the House. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PAPPAS].

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me, and I want to thank him once again for organizing this special order that we are doing each week that we are in session, to highlight an area of public policy that is of concern to you and to many of us here, and to talk about some of the experiences that we have had in our own respective districts and States.

The debate here this evening, or the discussion here this evening, is really aimed at trying to create a better America, and to help many families within our districts and certainly within our country. For many of us, it is obvious that if we do not pay some attention to this, the future for many people in our country is not going to be what it certainly should be. The young people of our Nation are the future. They are the future doctors, teachers, businessmen and businesswomen, and yes, even future Members of this Congress.

Juvenile crime for many people is the result of substance abuse. In speaking to teachers, youth group leaders from various religious institutions throughout my State and district, that has been confirmed for me.

I recently saw a study that had gotten the opinion of police chiefs around the country, and they believed, or 31 percent of them believe, that reducing substance abuse, specifically narcotic abuse, would be a very positive step in reducing the crime rate. For many of these police chiefs, reducing drug abuse was three times as crucial as putting more police officers on the street. That that was certainly something that raised my eyebrows.

I know that many of our colleagues here probably saw an article in many of the newspapers, even here in Washington, DC, within the last couple of days, in which two teenagers from my State in Sussex County, the northern part of New Jersey, lured and then killed two pizza delivery people.

I just read an article today in one of our major newspapers in our State, in the Star Ledger, that both suspects in this slaying had a history of drug abuse, and perhaps this brutal crime could have been prevented if these two people had not begun using drugs.

I would like to quote from the Star Ledger article. One of the alleged perpetrators' grandmother was interviewed, and she said, and I will quote in part, ''This young man was transformed in the past 2 months through drug use.'' This change was radical, and she was speaking of his demeanor, how it changed, and that he had, among other things, tremendous mood swings. Obviously she is very upset about not just what took place to these two young people who were killed, but also what drugs did in changing her grandson.

In New Jersey, though, for several years our Governor has established the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and we have really seen it make a difference. What it does is it establishes in each of our 21 counties in our State an alliance which is made up of people from county government, municipal government, people from the religious community, youth organizations, education, labor, business, many nonprofit, volunteer organizations.

What they have done, which is somewhat unique even for New Jersey, is meet to determine what is their need in their respective community, and how can that need best be addressed. There is some government funding that