

pre-K education, what does it say? That says you don't care that much about educating young kids, even though you know that, if you start kids off behind all the other kids, they are going to be struggling the rest of their academic careers.

It is going to affect their self-confidence in their academic lives, and they are not going to go far in school. It has ripple effects. A higher percentage of them will get in trouble with the law. How much do we end up paying for all of those things?

If you don't devote money to pre-K, it says you don't care about those things. Those things are not included in your set of values.

I also want to talk about another fellow because, when you go and slash pre-K and K-12 and Pell grants for colleges and you turn your back on seniors and veterans and you favor the haves against the have-nots—and even the middle class—when you do those things, you do that all in the name of austerity and cutting because you are worried about the deficit and you are worried about \$16 trillion—\$17 trillion is higher than anybody has ever counted in the history of mankind; and so therefore, we have to cut, cut, cut.

A lot of that is well-intentioned—it really is—because people are afraid, but you have to look at the current debt of this Nation in the context of what the gross domestic product is.

The truth is our national debt is not the highest it has ever been in connection with and comparison to the gross domestic product. It is not anywhere near the highest it has ever been. That is something pointed out by another fellow from Scranton, former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich.

Robert Reich is all of about 5 feet tall on his tiptoes, but he is a giant when it comes to labor policy and economics. He points out forcefully, time and time again, that if you compare the national debt to the gross domestic product, the highest it ever was in that ratio was after World War II.

It was after we defeated the Nazis, after we defeated the Axis powers, and after we had engineered the New Deal and brought this Nation out of the Great Depression, where upwards of 25 percent of people were unemployed, and we had done all of that.

Robert Reich remembers vividly his father saying to him in the late forties, into the early fifties:

It's this Roosevelt debt we have been left with. You are going to be paying this off the rest of your life, and your children will be paying that Roosevelt debt off the rest of your life and your grandchildren, too.

That is not what happened, though. Robert Reich happily tells the way it played out. The way it played out, what did we do? We believed in ourselves. We believed in the strength and the vision of Americans and we did things like the Marshall Plan, and we rebuilt Europe and Japan and built the interstate highway system in this country.

We sent the GIs to college under the GI Bill. For crying out loud, we sent a man to the Moon. We did all those things because we were bullish on America. We need to continue that approach, which is something that Robert Reich likes to point out.

He says that, by the late sixties, nobody could mention the Roosevelt debt with a straight face. So I am here to say, Madam Speaker and Mr. POCAN, that we need to do that again. We need to grow our way out of the debt.

It is nowhere near as bad as it was after World War II, but we still have to grow our way out of it by believing in ourselves by being bullish on America.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, again, Mr. CARTWRIGHT. The work you have done on behalf of the people not just of Scranton—I have heard you mention Scranton many times on the floor—but for all of Pennsylvania and the entire country, thank you for all your efforts. I really appreciate that.

In closing, for this part of the Progressive Caucus Special Order hour, I just want to hit the main point again when it comes to the budget.

We all know that the top three issues facing this country are jobs, jobs, jobs. There is such a difference between what the Democrats and the Progressives have proposed and what the Republicans have proposed.

Again, the Better Off Budget for the Progressive Caucus shows an 8.8 million increase in the number of jobs in this country. We invest in our infrastructure. We invest in our schools. We invest in job training. We create 8.8 million jobs.

The Republican budget, according to the Economic Policy Institute, would cost this country 3.1 million jobs. Those 3.1 million jobs are as many people as we have working in the entire State of Wisconsin. Think about firing every single person in the State of Wisconsin. That is the job loss that would come out of the Republican budget.

So it is an honor tonight to talk on behalf of the Progressive Caucus and our budget and to highlight the many problems that we are going to have tomorrow when this body votes on the Republican budget.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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THE IMPACT OF THE RYAN BUDGET ON AMERICA'S WOMEN

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana) Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS) for 27 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. EDWARDS. I thank the gentleman for his remarks.

Madam Speaker, I want to rise this evening to discuss our annual budget. Congress has a number of responsibilities, but a big one is that Congress is

tasked annually with developing a budget that lays out our Nation's priorities in spending and lays out a budget that reflects our values.

Democrats have been working to provide a fair shot for everyone to succeed by creating good-paying jobs and an opportunity for working families. Our country is, in fact, strongest when our economy grows from the middle out, and not from the top down.

Unfortunately the fiscal year 2015 Republican budget introduced by PAUL RYAN takes the opposite approach. It benefits the few at the top by showing tax breaks on millionaires and corporate special interests, while shifting the burden of the Federal budget to middle class families.

Once again, Mr. RYAN and Republicans have been convinced that the best way to help working families is to stop helping working families. Unfortunately, the Ryan budget resolution would actually harm families, most especially, women and children.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the Ryan budget would cost jobs and slow our recovery, costing 1.1 million jobs in fiscal year 2015, and rising to about 3 million in the following year.

Republicans are raising taxes on middle class families with children by an average of at least \$2,000 a year in order to cut taxes for millionaires.

Now, let's just take a look at that, Madam Speaker. A recent analysis by Citizens for Tax Justice finds that, under the Ryan plan, taxpayers with income exceeding \$1 million in 2015 would receive an average net tax decrease of over \$200,000 in that fiscal year.

Now, let's balance this. Families with children would have to pay an additional \$2,000, and millionaires would get the benefit of a decrease in their taxes of \$200,000. \$2,000 for working families, and \$200,000 for millionaires.

Now, of course, the Ryan budget doesn't touch tax breaks for big oil and gas companies that ship jobs overseas. After all, you have to have priorities, priorities and budgets that are a statement of values.

So it is very clear that the Ryan priorities and the Ryan budget priorities benefit millionaires. It is very clear, unsurprisingly, that the Ryan budget also repeals, yet again, the Affordable Care Act, despite the fact that 9.3 million people now have health care as a result of the Affordable Care Act, that according to a Rand Corporation study.

Now, repealing the Affordable Care Act would allow insurance companies, once again, to treat a woman and being a woman as a preexisting condition, would once again enable insurance companies to charge women more than men.

Insurance companies would also be able to deny women coverage because of preexisting conditions, including a history of domestic violence, breast and cervical cancer, and C-sections.

Under this budget, millions of women and their families would be stripped of

the private marketplace health plans and expanded Medicaid coverage that they have obtained under the Affordable Care Act.

In fact, more than 47 million woman would again have to pay out-of-pocket-costs for lifesaving preventive health services like mammograms and cervical cancer screenings. Up to 4 million women seniors, that is right, 4 million women seniors would fall, once again, into the prescription drug doughnut hole, and they would have to start reaching back into their pockets once again to pay for their prescription drugs because the Ryan budget reopens the doughnut hole.

I want to repeat that for the American people. The Ryan budget reopens the doughnut hole that Democrats closed. As a result, seniors in the doughnut hole will pay an additional \$18,000 over 10 years, on average, for their prescription drugs.

Look, women make up about 55 percent of Medicare enrollees, and they would suffer the most, frankly, when the Medicare guarantee is replaced, under the Ryan budget, with a voucher in 2024.

That is right. The Ryan budget wants to change the Medicare system, take away the Medicare guarantee for the 55 percent of the enrollees who are women, for all enrollees, with premiums for traditional Medicare going up about 50 percent on average. Think what that means for America's women who are seniors.

Indeed, the Republican plan would draw traditional Medicare into a death spiral. It would end it as we know it.

Not just that, but the Ryan budget also slashes Medicaid by \$732 billion over 10 years, or nearly 25 percent in 2024, with the largest impact on women.

I will continue, because the Ryan budget does such devastation to America's women, that it bears repeating. But with that, I will yield some time to my colleague from Nevada (Ms. TITUS).

Ms. TITUS. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend, DONNA EDWARDS for organizing tonight's important colloquy and Special Order to talk about the Ryan Republican budget and its unacceptable impact on women.

For the fourth year in a row, Chairman RYAN has proposed an uncompromising budget plan that is out of touch with Nevada's priorities and the country's vision for the future.

Chairman RYAN has used a lot of gimmicks in this budget, but no amount of chicanery can hide what it means for women.

Instead of laying out a plan to strengthen and grow the middle class, Representative RYAN's budget disproportionately harms low-income women and the families they struggle to support. It also undermines the health and economic security of the elderly and the disabled, most of whom are women, as you have just pointed out.

It would repeal the Affordable Care Act and the critical protections and

benefits this landmark legislation offers to women. Millions of women and their families would have to pay out of pocket for lifesaving preventive health services such as mammograms and cervical cancer screenings.

Insurance companies would be allowed, once again, to treat being a woman as a preexisting condition. And over 200,000 women in Nevada alone would lose access to affordable health insurance that is provided by the ACA.

The Ryan budget also threatens a laundry list of vital programs that help southern Nevada women and children, such as SNAP, WIC, Head Start, TANF, and Pell grants, just to name a few.

Currently, over 75,000 Nevada women and children rely on WIC, and 358,000 Nevadans depend on SNAP, 154,000 of whom are children. In addition, nearly 5,000 children in Nevada participate in Head Start, and 33,000 Nevada students benefit from Pell grants.

Under the Ryan budget, women could lose access to these critical programs, programs that help them put food on the table and give their children access to the education they need to succeed.

The Ryan budget also eliminates the Brand USA program, which fosters international tourism, an industry that employs many women in service jobs in Nevada and around the country.

Instead of protecting women and children, Representative RYAN and the Republican Party would rather provide the richest one-tenth of 1 percent, those households making more than \$3.3 million a year, with a \$1.2 million tax cut.

Now, the Federal budget is a blueprint for our Nation's future. It is a statement of our priorities as a Nation, and it should provide a path forward that we can all be proud of.

My constituents in Las Vegas, and our constituents all around the country, deserve better than this rehashed Ryan budget which slashes programs for children, dismantles health care, eliminates the safety net for seniors, and defunds education and needed research and development.

This budget is not a road to prosperity, as Representative RYAN calls it; it is a road to ruin. And as someone said recently, it is like giving the middle finger to the middle class.

Instead, we need a balanced plan that protects women and their families while making investments in our future. Let's work on that kind of budget.

So, again, I want to thank my friends who have come to the floor tonight to point out these problems.

I yield back to the gentlewoman from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS).

Ms. EDWARDS. I thank the gentlewoman from Nevada for pointing out the many ways in which the Ryan budget impacts the women of Nevada and impacts the women of this country.

The gentlewoman mentioned something that I think, again, bears repeating. The Ryan budget cuts food stamps

by \$137 billion over the next 10 years, which would, in fact, be devastating for millions of America's women, because 62 percent of adult food stamp recipients, in fact, are women.

And at least 200,000 women and children would be dropped from the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children, if the 15 percent cut in 2016 non-defense appropriations was applied across the board.

The Ryan budget calls for at least \$500 billion in cuts to income support programs like the earned income tax credit and the child tax credit, unemployment insurance, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and child nutrition programs, including school lunches. That is right: taking food right out of the mouths of our youngest children who need that nutrition in order to learn and be 21st century learners.

Sixty-six percent of individuals who depend on senior meals like Meals on Wheels are women. Those senior meals would be cut by 15 percent in 2016, if the GOP cut in non-defense appropriations was applied proportionately.

Up to 5.6 million women students would find college less affordable due to \$145 billion in cuts to Pell grants under the Ryan budget.

Up to 170,000 children would lose access to Head Start, and up to 3.4 million disadvantaged children at 8,000 schools would lose vital Title I education programs.

I keep going on, and it seems incredibly devastating to America's families and, particularly, to America's women. It is almost as though the Ryan budget were a Mack truck just running right over top of America's women.

Now, Democrats have an agenda and a budget that, in fact, reflects our values of strengthening the middle class, of closing the opportunity gap, of enabling women and their families to succeed. It is a budget that helps women and families address some of the biggest economic challenges facing them.

It calls for raising the Federal minimum wage, for ensuring equal pay for equal work, for expanding family and medical leave, and for making child care more affordable.

In my home State of Maryland, child care costs for an infant can run to \$12,936 a year for child care for one infant. In a lot of cases, that is more than you pay for a 4-year institution, or a community college, just to have your child in child care.

These are devastating for America's families. In fact, America's families are spending 35 percent of their income, of their family's income, in child care. That is more than we are spending on mortgages. It is certainly more than we are saving, Madam Speaker.

As we know, women make on average just 77 cents on a dollar a man makes. For African American women and Latinas, the gap is even larger. African American women earn just 64 cents,

and Latinas earn only 54 cents for every dollar earned by white, non-Hispanic men.

Two-thirds of the minimum wage earners in this country are women, and family and leave protections fail to cover nearly half of full-time employees.

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The Democrats' budget, in fact, takes a look at these things and says, you know what, people are working hard, and they are trying to take care of themselves and their families; and, in fact, in this country, with so many women who are either principal breadwinners or, certainly, partner breadwinners in their families, the cuts envisioned by the Ryan budget would be devastating for America's women.

We know that child care expenses, for example, that are important to men and women are consuming so much of American families' income, and yet the Ryan budget would take \$2,000 away from working families and enable millionaires to get the benefit of \$200,000. Think about that—your average family, \$2,000; millionaires, \$200,000.

According to the Ryan budget, the budget actually fails to call for bills promoting equal pay for equal work for women. It fails to increase the minimum wage. It fails to provide for paid sick days for workers. The Ryan budget fails to help working families afford the cost of child care.

We do have solutions, as Democrats, to these challenges. I mean, after all, it is really true that, when women succeed, America succeeds. Our agenda ensures that women will have the tools they need to fully participate in the 21st century economy.

Madam Speaker, Republican priorities are making tax cuts for the wealthy permanent, and they are shrinking the size of government, regardless of the damage that it would cause.

As I have detailed, the Ryan budget doubles down on policies that, in fact, hurt working families. I think that it is time, Madam Speaker, for us to pay attention to what is happening to women—to women who are increasingly in the workplace, but are saddled with the burden of incomes that are not keeping pace, needing assistance to help them get by, not because they are not working, not because they are not contributing; and the Ryan budget does more devastation to America's women.

So I would urge my colleagues to, once again, take a look at this and to say, you know, in a country that has so much and that promises so much and where there really should be more opportunity for all, that we don't need a budget that just rips apart the lives of women and children and families, and the Ryan budget does just that.

I look today at the Congressional Progressive Caucus alternative budget. I voted for that because it is good for America. I looked at this Congressional Black Caucus budget. I voted for that because it is good for America.

I will look at the Democratic alternative to the devastating Ryan budget because it is good for America. It is good for America's families. It is good for America's women.

Madam Speaker, with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE NEED FOR GENERIC DRUG PRICING IN MEDICARE PART D

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, it is an honor to always come to this floor and especially talk about needs, and I think this Republican majority speaks to the needs of our families, our moms and dads, and the struggles that they go through every day.

One of those areas that I have been concerned about since coming to Congress and finding out about it deals with our independent pharmacies, deals with the contracts, and deals with the pharmacy benefit managers.

These are things that need to be fixed because they are destroying some of the very fabric of our communities, and these community pharmacists are just asking for a chance, and right now, they seem to be on the outside looking in, when it comes to dealing with these.

Tonight, I am pleased to be joined by not only my good friend who I served with not only in Georgia, but up here in Washington as well, Congressman AUSTIN SCOTT, who is a cochair of the Congressional Pharmacy Caucus; and I would love to have him be a part of this tonight.

Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia. Well, thank you, Mr. COLLINS. As you know, you and I served together and had a great relationship there in Georgia, where Democrats and Republicans worked together to balance the budget and solve the problems, and I sure wish we could get to that up here.

Tonight, we are here to talk about an issue that affects us all as well, and that is transparency in pharmacy pricing and highlighting the need for our rural pharmacist, our community pharmacist, and the challenges that they face with Medicare Part D programs.

Just recently, I met with a pharmacist from my district, Mr. Daryl Reynolds; and like many other pharmacists from the Eighth District, he runs a small store and has been hurt by the lack of transparency and pricing. Ultimately, that hurts his patients because it makes it hard for him to stay in business.

While the big pharmacy chains want to operate in the metropolitan areas—and that is wonderful—we in the rural parts of the country need our rural and community pharmacists, and pharmacists like Daryl are a vital component of our national health care system, for those of us who live great distances from the metropolitan areas.

They know us by name. They know our drug interactions. They are able to work with us and our physicians. They make sure that we are taken care of and that we are taking the right medications for the problems that we may have.

In order to continue these relationships, we need to make sure that the Medicare Part D plans that they work through to help our seniors have the pricing transparency with pharmacy benefit managers.

In many cases, our community pharmacists—because of the way the pharmacy benefit managers operate—are reimbursed at less than what the drug actually costs the small community pharmacy. These contracts are non-negotiable. They are vague and opaque, and most of the time, it puts a small community independent businessman up against a multibillion dollar company.

These PBMs and their maximum allowable cost prices, they don't update them when the prices go up, and that leaves the pharmacist paying more, again, for the drug than they actually get reimbursed for the drug, and these are the pricing practices that need to be fixed for our community pharmacists.

I am here tonight with my colleague from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) to bring light to this issue. CMS recently proposed rules that would take an important step in addressing this need for generic drug pricing transparency.

How can transparency be a bad thing for Medicare Part D? The rule simply requires that Medicare Part D sponsors should agree in, their contracts with CMS, to update the prices in a timely manner to reflect the current market price.

In rural districts like mine, access to a community pharmacist is critical for people to receive the medications they need. It is imperative for the health and wellness of our rural communities.

I want to commend you, Mr. COLLINS, for your legislation. I look forward to working with you to pass that and thank you for being here tonight on behalf of community pharmacists.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. I appreciate that, to my good friend from south Georgia.

You know, it is amazing. In those communities that you just spoke of, they need the help—not that they are asking for a handout. They are just asking for fairness, and I think that is what we miss so often today in our debates here on this floor, and they should be on this floor.

We talk about one group against the other, and really, Madam Speaker, this is about fairness. This is a simple issue of fairness and saying we in the government need to be in our proper constitutional role and to look at it in the framework of not tilting the scale one way or another, but saying what are we doing that helps the American people and also looking ahead to—especially in an area such as health care in which