

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for my colleague, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. *Cantor*), but when I listen to the arguments being made, I have to reject them outright. The gentleman talked about how Medicare is going broke and the gentleman said, What is the solution? Well, the solution is for the Republican leadership in the House and the Republican President to abandon their failed economic plan, which essentially over the last 2 years has been to create more and more tax cuts, drive the Federal Government into deficit, the biggest debt we have had in anybody's memory, and borrow all of the money from the Medicare trust fund so it goes broke.

Mr. Speaker, if we keep borrowing from the trust fund in order to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy, of course there is not going to be money in Medicare. The solution is easy, get rid of the tax cuts that are primarily favoring the well-to-do and corporate interests, and then Medicare and the trust fund will have money and there is a solution to the problem.

That is what we were doing when President Clinton was in office, we were getting out of debt, and we had a balanced budget. The other side of the aisle created the problem, the economic downturn, and the situation where the trust fund does not have the money; so do not talk to me about solutions, they are easy: Get rid of the failed Republican economic plan.

I listened to what the gentleman said, and he was honest about the facts. He said in 2010 there is going to be a blended rate of the government plan and private plans, but what the gentleman fails to tell us is this blended rate is less than what traditional Medicare costs at that point. Because there is a voucher system in place, the senior who wants to stay in traditional Medicare is going to pay more. There is a blended rate with the traditional Medicare and the private plan. If the traditional Medicare costs more, seniors will have to pay out of pocket, and most seniors who want to stay in traditional Medicare will not have enough money to pay out of pocket. It could cost them \$500 more a year, \$1,000

more a year, \$4,000 more a year, the sky is the limit. Increasingly, a lot of seniors will drop out and not be able to have traditional Medicare . That is why we say essentially what they are doing is trying to save money, and they are saving money by keeping money from access to traditional Medicare .

The gentleman talks about choice of plans. How is there a choice of a plan if you cannot afford to pay for the plan you want, which is traditional Medicare . And meanwhile, you lose your choice of doctor and your choice of hospital because the only way you can get your health care is by joining an HMO, a private plan. So you do not have a choice of plan because you cannot afford to stay in traditional Medicare . You do not have a choice of hospital or doctor because you have to go into an HMO to get your health care.

The facts are simple. The other side of the aisle is setting up a voucher. They do not care about the traditional Medicare program. They say it costs too much when, in reality, they have created the situation that is making it go broke, and it is not really broke, but certainly it will be if we continue with this economic policy.

I have to look at it from the point of view as a senior citizen. They want to privatize. So you have to say, we will give you a drug benefit, but you have to join an HMO to get the drug benefit. And you are sort of dangling the opportunity for a drug benefit out there, but in the course of getting that drug benefit you are setting up a program with this premium support or voucher which essentially privatizes Medicare and forces people out of the traditional Medicare program.

So it is really an effort to sort of ``behind the scenes" get the seniors out of traditional Medicare and force them into HMOs by suggesting somehow we cannot afford traditional Medicare and that this is the only way to get a drug benefit.

I think they have to be honest about what they are doing. I support the motion of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. *Davis*) because it makes quite clear that on the Democratic side of the aisle, we do not want seniors forced into vouchers or forced into HMOs. We do not want them losing their choice of doctors or choice of hospitals, and we do not want to set up a situation where essentially we kill

traditional Medicare . That is what the Republicans are all about, and that is why we need to support this motion to instruct.