



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PROTECTING MEDICARE

TRUSTEES REPORT CONCLUDES MEDICARE WILL GO BANKRUPT IN 2001; DOLE CALLS ON PRESIDENT CLINTON TO JOIN REPUBLICANS TO PRESERVE MEDICARE

The Medicare Trustees have now released their report on the state of the Medicare Trust Fund. The news is not good. Instead of going bankrupt in the year 2002, as they previously forecasted, the Trustees now conclude that Medicare will go bankrupt in the year 2001--just five years from now.

For the past year and a half, this Republican Congress has attempted to deal honestly and forthrightly with the impending Medicare meltdown.

GOP Budget Protects, Preserves & Strengthens Medicare

We put forward a budget that would protect, preserve, and strengthen Medicare by reducing its unsustainable rate of growth, while still allowing for a healthy growth rate.

We did not claim that our plan was perfect or that it solved the long term problem. But it was a real attempt to alleviate a crisis that will immediately impact 37 million Americans, and will have repercussions on tens of millions more.

Along with our proposals to provide for short-term solvency in the Medicare trust funds, I also suggested on numerous occasions that President Clinton appoint a blue-ribbon bi-partisan advisory committee-- similar to the one I served on in 1983 that saved Social Security--to help deal with this crisis in the long term. I was interested to see that Secretary Shalala made a similar recommendation today.

My response to the initial report of the Medicare Trustees was based on my belief that leadership means more than just talking about problems. It also means doing something to solve them.

Work on Bipartisan Basis to Preserve Medicare

It is also clear to me that if we are to be successful we must put politics aside and work on a bi-partisan basis.

Unfortunately, President Clinton has been unwilling to do that. Ever since the Trustees--three of whom are members of his administration--issued their original report, the administration has chosen either to ignore the warnings of Medicare's impending bankruptcy, or to engage in a very sad campaign to frighten America's senior citizens.

It is an undeniable fact that the Republican proposal allowed Medicare spending per beneficiary to increase from \$4,800 per person to \$7,200 per person over seven years.

It is also an undeniable fact that in their ill-fated health care reform proposal, the Clinton administration advocated slowing Medicare's rate of growth.

Despite these facts, however, the President vetoed our Medicare proposal, and we have heard nothing but attacks on Republicans for "slashing" and "cutting" Medicare.

And when the President was asked not long ago at a news conference why he continued to use these terms even though they are not true, his response was essentially that the media made him do it.

Americans Depending on Medicare Deserve Better

With the release of today's report, the inescapable conclusion is that while the rhetoric flew, Medicare was put at further risk.

And those who say that talk is cheap should know that 18 months of misleading rhetoric may have gained one side points in the opinion polls, it also put Medicare another \$90 billion plus in the red.

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The bottom line is that the 37 million Americans who depend on Medicare deserve better. Future generations of Americans who will need Medicare deserve better.

The choice is clear. America's leaders can spend the next five months focusing on the next election, thereby allow Medicare to grow ever closer to bankruptcy; or we can focus on the next generation, and do what we must to save Medicare.

It will not be easy nor simple. The solution cannot be a shell game, moving money from one part of Medicare to another. A tax increase is also not the answer.

I call on the President to come forward with real initiatives so we can preserve the Medicare program and to join with Republicans on a bipartisan basis, as I have proposed before, to address this very serious problem.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 3:15 p.m.