





**NEWS
FROM:**

**U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

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MEDICARE REFORM

DOLE INTRODUCES MEDICARE RESTORATION ACT OF 1996 TO ESTABLISH BLUE-RIBBON, BI-PARTISAN ADVISORY COMMISSION TO DEAL WITH IMPENDING MEDICARE CRISIS

Last Wednesday, the Medicare trustees released their report on the state of the Medicare Trust Fund, and the report was grim. Instead of going bankrupt in 2002, as they previously forecasted, the trustees conclude that Medicare will go bankrupt in 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.

We put forward a budget that would protect, preserve, and strengthen Medicare by reducing it's 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 seniors and disabled Americans, and will have repercussions on tens of millions more.

In May of 1995, I called for a bi-partisan commission to be set up to save Medicare similar to the one that saved Social Security. Unfortunately, the White House dismissed the idea and decided to attack Republican plans to save the Medicare system.

That is why I rise today to introduce the Medicare Restoration Act to establish a blue-ribbon, bi-partisan advisory commission to help deal with this crisis.

In my view, leadership means more than just talking about problems. It also means doing something to solve them.

This commission will be responsible for reviewing the current, short-term and long-term condition of the Medicare Trust Fund. The commission will be composed of 15 members appointed by the President, Senate and House of Representatives. The members of this commission will be from both political parties, because it is 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.

In February 1995, President Clinton submitted a budget that contained no provisions for saving Medicare.

In April 1995, the Medicare trustees -- three of whom are members of his administration -- issued their original report and urged "prompt, effective and decisive action." the administration instead chose to attack Republican plans to save the system.

Last March, the President submitted a budget which, According to the Congressional Budget Office, would only stave off Medicare's bankruptcy for one more year.

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.

(more)

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.

With the release of the trustee'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.

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.

I call on the President to come forward and support this bipartisan commission 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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