

## The Left's lies on GOP Medicare reform

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Some Democrats and their left-wing supporters are telling grotesque lies about a Republican Medicare reform plan, sinking so low in one instance, so pathetically, immorally, disgustingly low, as to try to convince the nation through an ad that the reform will murder the elderly.

It's not just the ad by an outfit called The Agenda Project that's threatening rescue from our spending and debt plight, although there is surely a special place in Hell for such nasty propaganda.

The ad shows someone looking vaguely like Rep. Paul Ryan, R.-Wisc., push an old woman to the edge of a cliff in a wheelchair, dumping the protesting, helpless soul to her certain death when they get there. Along the way, we are told how half the 46 million Medicare recipients make no more than \$28,000 a year. It is made to seem they will have to fend for themselves if the Republican plan flies.

Without the video vividness, any number of Democrats (along with Republican Newt Gingrich) have spread similarly dire depictions even though the plan drawn up by Ryan and passed by the House would not go into full effect for 10 years and would not apply to anyone currently on Medicare. The government would still provide funds for health insurance and would reward the well off less than those with lower incomes, which is something you would think the soak-the-rich left would applaud.

Given the known proclivity of Democrats to demonize entitlement sanity and the fact that Americans do cling to these programs like lifesavers in a sea storm, it took extraordinary courage for Ryan and the GOP to address this issue honestly in the first place. The concept, by the way, is not a far-right invention -- Alice Rivlin, appointed to top positions by Lyndon Johnson, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, endorses it.

That's not to say she likes the particulars or that the concept or the particulars should not be debated. Some Republicans besides Gingrich don't like the plan, and I agree with the case for increased vouchers for the least affluent and still more means testing. Consider economic writer Robert Samuelson's observations that the number of poor elderly has been shrinking, the number of high-income elderly rising and that married-couple households over 65 years of age have a median net worth of \$385,000, a lot more than most of those funding their benefits.

The thing is, this plan does eventually begin cutting Medicare spending in a serious way, as we absolutely must do for the sake of both Medicare and the nation. No one questions that revenues are going to fall trillions of dollars short of promises, and you can't fix it with federal taxes. As an online Cato Institute piece observes, the Congressional Budget Office says most of these taxes would have to be doubled over the next 40 years to foot the bill, reducing national income by a fifth. Want a job, anyone?

The trouble with most congressional opponents is that they have no answer of their own, preferring reelection to serving their country, and Medicare's chief actuary has cast doubt on whether Obamacare's Medicare tinkering will do the trick, either.

Remember, too, that Medicare is just part of the issue -- three-fourths of us get some federal benefit or the other whether we need it or not, and as Samuelson and a host of other analysts testify, this largesse cannot be sustained. If the taxes don't get us, debt will, dramatically darkening our economic way and making this passing recession seem happiness and sunshine by comparison.

Government has to cut it out, but instead what we get is a vicious TV lie, too many Democratic opportunists, some cowardly Republicans and a president whose chief ambition has so far been to pretty much enlarge everything despite some talk to the contrary.

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