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## Ryan's plan no Waterloo ...

By Sabrina L. Schaeffer - 05/25/11 01:29 PM ET

I have to respond to fellow contributor Brent Budowsky's post yesterday, "[Medicare Extremism, GOP Waterloo](#)," in which he describes Rep. Paul Ryan's (R-Wis.) proposal to overhaul Medicare as "the worst policy idea and the worst political blunder of the millennium."

It's true Republican Jane Corwin's defeat in New York last night suggests the GOP might be losing the fight over Medicare reform; but the fact is Corwin tried to have her cake and eat it too. She opposed ObamaCare while criticizing the Ryan plan, and she offered no clear alternatives of her own.

Still, to focus too intently on one election — and one reform proposal — is to lose sight of the much larger issue at hand. Our massive entitlement spending, in the form of Medicare and Social Security, is our largest outlay, and poses a serious threat to the nation's long-term economic and national security.

A recent estimate of Social Security by the Cato Institute reveals that outstanding obligations to future retirees stand at nearly \$16 trillion over the next 75 years. What's more, the Trustees of Social Security and Medicare just reported (lest our memories be that fleeting) that both programs are expected to dry up five years earlier than originally predicted and leave a permanent deficit in their wake.

We know the long-term solvency of Social Security and Medicare can't be fixed through incremental reforms on the margins — tax hikes and benefit cuts alone. We need to fundamentally change the way we think about Medicare, and more importantly, about how we view the relationship between citizen and state. Whether or not you like his plan, it's clear Ryan understands this.

Winning the message war might be an uphill battle for the GOP, but last night was no Waterloo. Ryan, a large contingent of Republicans and the majority of Americans (51 percent) understand that free market competition, rather than more government intervention, is the best way to increase freedom and drive down healthcare costs. With respect to my colleague, offering up a reform proposal that reflects those ideas is no political blunder.

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