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Boehner on Medicare Cuts: No Thanks!

Peter Suderman | October 28, 2010

Last month, House Minority Leader John Boehner said that when it comes to rising entitlement spending, he wasn't ready to talk about solutions. Apparently, though, he's found one solution he's ready to share: Ditch cuts to Medicare. From Cato's Daniel Mitchell:

While flipping through the radio on my way to pick my son up from school yesterday afternoon, I was dumbfounded to hear Congressman John Boehner talk about repealing Obama's Medicare cuts on Sean Hannity's show.

I wasn't shocked that Boehner was referring to non-existent cuts. (Medicare spending is projected to jump from \$519 billion in 2010 to \$677 billion in 2015 according to the Congressional Budget Office). I've been dealing with Washington's dishonest definition of "spending cuts" for decades, so I'm hardly fazed by that type of routine inaccuracy.

But I was amazed that the presumptive future Speaker of the House went on a supposedly conservative talk radio show and said that increasing Medicare spending would be on the agenda of a GOP-controlled Congress.

I have serious problems with the way the PPACA handled Medicare. However, as I've noted many times before, I also think long-term reductions in planned Medicare spending are both necessary and unavoidable. Yet with a few notable exceptions, the GOP has largely declared Medicare off limits, and made a point to avoid talking about entitlements except to criticize the way the PPACA alters Medicare. At the same time, the party has been fairly vocal in worrying about our unsustainable debt levels. Yet Medicare is a major contributor to the long-term deficit problem. Of course, as Republicans are well aware at this point, it's also very popular with seniors. That turns Medicare policy into a pretty clear test of whether Republican leadership is actually serious about making good on its fiscally responsible rhetoric. And right now, with Rep. Boehner primed to become Speaker of the House after the election, it's a test the party is failing.