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ROCKEFELLER SLAMS RYAN-ROMNEY BUDGET FOR UNDERMINING MEDICARE, MEDICAID & SOCIAL SECURITY

Video Available of Rockefeller Speaking

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Jay Rockefeller today spoke on the Senate floor about the detrimental impacts of the Ryan-Romney budget plan on families, seniors, and children throughout the country.

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[https://lfts.senate.gov/courier/web/1000@/wmDownload.html?url=https%3A%2F%2Flfts.senate.gov%2Fseos%2F1000%2Fmpd%2Fx1065f0^5db6bd338c6f383c93edeacef53a4046^2012-09-](https://lfts.senate.gov/courier/web/1000@/wmDownload.html?url=https%3A%2F%2Flfts.senate.gov%2Fseos%2F1000%2Fmpd%2Fx1065f0^5db6bd338c6f383c93edeacef53a4046^2012-09-29%2011%3A59%3A59^*^ui%2F1065%2Ffiles%2Fw20120913171015844%2FRockefellerS091312.mp4)

[29%2011%3A59%3A59^*^ui%2F1065%2Ffiles%2Fw20120913171015844%2FRockefellerS091312.mp4](https://lfts.senate.gov/courier/web/1000@/wmDownload.html?url=https%3A%2F%2Flfts.senate.gov%2Fseos%2F1000%2Fmpd%2Fx1065f0^5db6bd338c6f383c93edeacef53a4046^2012-09-29%2011%3A59%3A59^*^ui%2F1065%2Ffiles%2Fw20120913171015844%2FRockefellerS091312.mp4) to view video of Rockefeller speaking on the Senate floor today. The video is

also available on Rockefeller's [YouTube page](#).

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_5BC0esDww&feature=youtu.be)

Below please find Rockefeller's remarks on the Senate floor as prepared for delivery:

**Senator Jay Rockefeller
Floor Statement on the Ryan-Romney Budget
September 13, 2012**

Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the so-called Ryan plan – endorsed by former Governor Romney – which, when you read it, is nothing more than a diabolical blueprint for slashing services that help families, seniors, and children all across this country.

This Ryan-Romney plan, the centerpiece of the Republican Presidential campaign, has finally come under new scrutiny as people got a good look at it leading up to the GOP convention last month.

I, for one, have been ashamed of this document for much longer. I was proud the Senate voted against it, although it was equally discouraging that a majority of the House voted for it.

I am here today because I want to set the record straight on what the Ryan-Romney plan would do to people in my home state of West Virginia and all across the country.

The Ryan budget proposal tackles the deficit by shredding the safety net that families across this country rely on in tough times.

In essence, the unbalanced Ryan proposal guts programs for seniors, people who are disabled, children, and families struggling to make ends meet, and then turning those cuts into \$4 trillion worth of tax breaks for the very wealthiest Americans and large corporations.

They give the average millionaire a tidy little tax cut of \$265,000 while undermining our economy.

And they do not contribute a penny to deficit reduction – not one penny.

Consider how they shred health care, with \$2.9 trillion in health care cuts, not just from repealing health care reform but also by gutting Medicare and Medicaid.

The Ryan-Romney plan would take the Medicare that more than 50 million seniors rely on and turn it into a privatized voucher program.

They would cap how much the government spends on seniors' health care regardless of their health needs – letting profit-seeking private health insurance companies decide what to cover and what not to. That alone costs seniors an additional \$6,000 per year.

If seniors are not able to pay the difference, then they are simply out of luck under the Ryan-Romney plan.

This plan also rips apart the Medicaid program by turning it into a block grant program.

Right now Medicaid is a lifeline to 70 million Americans, including families and children living in and near poverty. Medicaid today provides long-term care for more than half of seniors in the U.S. – including seniors who need care at home and seniors in nursing homes.

The fact is that middle-income families in this country cannot afford the \$80,000 or more per year that it costs to keep a loved one in a nursing home. The only way to do it without bankrupting the entire family is with the help of Medicaid.

Scaling back Medicaid hurts American families and forces state governments to cut services or go deeper into debt themselves.

The Ryan-Romney plan would mean millions more Americans could not afford basic health care and we know what happens next – more people become sick with untreated illnesses and health care

costs go up for everyone. Nursing homes and the 1.8 million people who work there would be forced to slash services, turn away seniors, or close their doors.

In their frenzy to repeal health care reform – and with not a single proposal to replace it -- Ryan-Romney would also completely undo all of the new consumer protections to fight back against cruel health insurance practices.

The new provision ending discrimination by health insurance companies against people with preexisting conditions? Well Ryan-Romney would end that.

The reform that allows parents to keep their children on their insurance plans until the kids are 26 years old? Well Ryan-Romney dumps that, too.

And the prescription drug doughnut hole, which our reform bill had closed? Well Ryan-Romney opens it right back up – putting that \$4,200 per year right back onto the shoulders of our seniors.

Do you see a pattern here? It's absolutely appalling.

They don't talk about it, but even Social Security is threatened by their plans.

Social Security is a contract the American people have made with themselves. Virtually everyone pays in throughout their working years so that everyone has a safety net when they retire, or become disabled, or die young and leave a surviving spouse and children to struggle on without them.

Paul Ryan has been trying since 2004 to privatize Social Security – meaning he would like to see the American people bet their retirement savings in the volatile stock market. Not me. And not West Virginians.

Just think back to 2008 when the financial crisis hit. If every American had privatized Social Security accounts then, their retirement security would have been wiped out. Instead, while many people lost a lot of money in the stock market because of the crash – their Social Security benefits were safe.

Ryan's initial budgets called for privatizing Social Security, and while he backtracked on that a bit in his most recent budget, he still created a way to fast track the idea in Congress and showed his true colors on where he stands.

If given the platform to try again, he would surely make another serious push to jeopardize people's retirements in the stock market. We need to fight to protect and strengthen Social Security, not destroy it.

And don't just take it from me. There is far-ranging opposition to the Ryan-Romney plan from economists to religious leaders.

A group of Catholic Bishops recently asked Republicans to stop championing Ryan's drastic proposal because it is so hurtful to the poor. It fails the morality test.

And my colleague Senator Kent Conrad shared with us this week an amazing quote from one of President Ronald Reagan's economic advisors, Bruce Bartlett, which bears repeating. He said:

“Distributionally, the Ryan plan is a monstrosity. The rich would receive huge tax cuts while the social safety net would be shredded to pay for them. Even as an opening bid to begin budget negotiations with the Democrats, the Ryan plan cannot be taken seriously. It is less of a wish list than a fairy tale utterly disconnected from the real world, backed up by make-believe numbers and unreasonable assumptions. Ryan's plan isn't even an act of courage; it's just pandering to the Tea Party. A real act of courage would have been for him to admit as all serious budget analysts know, that revenues will have to rise well above 19 percent of GDP to stabilize this debt.”

In the coming weeks and months, we will continue to hear a lot of back and forth about the cowardly policy proposals coming from Paul Ryan and members of Congress who support his plan.

This is a deadly serious debate, with enormous consequences for our country. It is my sincere and urgent hope that as more Americans come to understand exactly where the Ryan-Romney plan would take our nation and its life-saving programs, they will run in the opposite direction.

The Republican budget is a slap in the face to millions of Americans. We can and will reduce our deficit – there is strong and enduring consensus on that point -- but we do not have to do it this way, and we must not do it this way.

I thank the Chair.

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