

Act Now—There's Still Time To Stop the "Revolution"

The *Monthly* Pull-out Guide to the GOP's Most Dangerous Ideas

It's harvest time for the Republican Congress. The seeds of the "Republican Revolution," planted with the introduction of the Contract With America, have grown from ideas, to proposals, to bills. Now, as Congress approaches the deadline for appropriations, the real business of deciding what will become law has begun. "Our goal is to get everything to the President's desk by October 1," Speaker Newt Gingrich said recently.

What follows is a list of Republican proposals that the Monthly considers to be grave threats to the economic and social well-being of the country. Each will be taken up in some form by Congress this fall. One

bill would let industry pollute our air. Another would give employers a free pass to endanger the safety of their employees. Republicans would also raise taxes on the working poor, and lower them on the affluent.

It is not too late, of course. With a strong stand by congressional Democrats (that means no missing votes—see box, page 32) and the aid of the small but pivotal group of moderate Republicans (see list, also on page 32), the most noxious of the Republican proposals can be stopped. Let your congressmen know what you think of the following ideas—before they become laws.

—Daniel Franklin

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THE BAD IDEA	WHO WINS	WHO LOSES	THE BOTTOM LINE
TAX CUTS FOR THE RICH	<i>the wealthy</i>	<i>the rest of us</i>	If it weren't for a little thing called "the deficit," tax cuts would be fine, as long as they went to those who most need them. But there is a deficit, and over half the benefits of the GOP tax cut will go to families earning more than \$100,000, while only 5 percent will go to those with incomes less than \$30,000. (Conference Report 104-159)
REPEALING THE SOCIAL SECURITY MEANS-TAX	<i>affluent elderly</i>	<i>future generations</i>	The GOP, so eager to tear into the federal benefits of the poor, are ready to rescind President Clinton's tax on affluent Social Security recipients. Clinton had earmarked the tax revenue for Medicare. Since everyone agrees that Medicare is in trouble, why drop some of its revenue? (104-159)
GRAZING RIGHTS	<i>western ranchers</i>	<i>the owners of federal lands: you</i>	Ranchers have been allowed to graze their cattle on federal lands for below-market rates for years. The GOP's "Livestock Grazing Act" would broaden the scam by subsidizing the artificially low rates. (S 852, HR 1713)
SECURITIES REFORM	<i>fraudulent companies and investment firms</i>	<i>small-time investors</i>	The GOP had an opportunity to address one of the major scams in the legal system, collusive securities class action suits, in which defendants are let off easy and the only ones who clean up are the lawyers, not the victims. Instead, the Republican proposal merely makes it harder for any anti-fraud suit to proceed, legitimate or not. (S 240, HR 1058)
TELECOM DEREGULATION	<i>telecom giants, i.e. Rupert Murdoch</i>	<i>smaller companies, TV watchers, telephone users</i>	The GOP telecommunications bill allows new concentrations of media power by lifting restrictions on ownership monopolies in cable and phone service, guaranteeing higher rates for the average user. (HR 1555, S 652)

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THE BAD IDEA	WHO WINS	WHO LOSES	THE BOTTOM LINE
REPEALING THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT	<i>the wealthy, whose tax cut this helps finance</i>	<i>the working poor</i>	One of Clinton's strongest initiatives, the EITC lowers taxes on those who most deserve a break, the working poor. While there has been some abuse of the EITC, that only means we need to improve it, not slice it to ribbons. The GOP's budget cuts the EITC by \$21 billion over the next seven years, in effect <i>raising</i> taxes on those who can least afford it. (104-159)
CUTTING AND BLOCK-GRANTING MEDICAID	<i>stingy governors</i>	<i>sick, poor people</i>	The GOP hopes to save money by slowing Medicaid's growth and passing control to the states. The block grants are invitations to the states to reduce the quality and scope of the program that offers health care to the country's poor and disabled. (104-159)
CUTTING HEAD START	<i>unclear</i>	<i>poor kids</i>	The GOP plans to cut \$137 million from this program, which offers preschool education and health care to the country's poorest children. As a result, fewer children will be enrolled and those that are will see reduced benefits. (HR 2127)
REVIVING "STAR WARS"	<i>the defense industry</i>	<i>the taxpayer</i>	Not only will completing the program suck up \$25 to \$40 billion, but it puts the United States in violation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia. (S 1026)
CONTINUING THE B-2, F-22, AND SEAWOLF SUBMARINE	<i>The defense industry, districts with defense plants</i>	<i>the taxpayer</i>	Though analysts insist that these expensive toys are anachronisms in the post-Cold War era, each has been given new life by parochial congressmen seeking to protect the jobs the weapons offer their states and districts. The House defense appropriations bill at least cuts the Seawolf, and the Senate doesn't fund the B-2, but look for both to be included in the final conference report. (S 1026, HR 2126)
ELIMINATING AMERICORPS	<i>unclear</i>	<i>Americans with big hearts but small wallets</i>	The Republican budget dismantles the country's fledgling national service program, through which people can earn money for college in exchange for much-needed community service. (HR 2099)
CUTTING CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS	<i>prison builders</i>	<i>everybody else</i>	Not long ago, crime prevention was the darling of left and right alike. George Bush named a midnight basketball league as one of his 1,000 points of light. Despite proven results, the GOP's revision of the crime bill eviscerates Clinton's preemptive strikes against crime. (HR 2076)
REPEALING THE ASSAULT WEAPON BAN	<i>hunters with bad aim, homicidal psychos</i>	<i>everyone but Superman</i>	True, Clinton's assault weapon ban doesn't purge the streets of high-powered rifles, but it does make a dent. Kowtowing to the NRA, a GOP pastime, the Republicans want to let the weapons back on the street. (S 3, HR 698)

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RESTRICTING OSHA'S INSPECTION POWERS	<i>businesses who don't care about their workers</i>	<i>workers</i>	This would preclude OSHA from investigating or punishing unsafe workplaces unless a worker dies or is seriously injured. The goal of OSHA is and should be to prevent workplace injuries. (HR 1834)
MAKING MANY OSHA REGULATIONS VOLUNTARY	<i>businesses who don't care about their workers</i>	<i>workers</i>	Since OSHA was established in 1970, the worker death rate has been cut in half, and 140,000 deaths have been prevented as a result. The Orwellianly named "Safety and Health Improvement and Regulatory Reform Act" would return us to the days when industry's only check was its own conscience. (HR 1834)
ELIMINATING THE MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION	<i>the mining industry</i>	<i>miners</i>	Since MSHA was established in 1969, the number of on-the-job mineworker deaths per year has been reduced 80 percent, from 425 to 84. No industry has been more exploitive of its workers and none is more deserving of government scrutiny. (HR 1834)
REMOVING AIR QUALITY REGULATIONS	<i>people who pollute the air</i>	<i>people who breathe the air</i>	In 1982, 100 million Americans lived in areas where the air was unhealthy; now, 56 million do. But with the work of cleaning our air only half finished, the Republicans see fit to remove most of the restrictions on major polluters such as oil refineries, cement makers, and chemical plants. (HR 2099)
ELIMINATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE	<i>no one</i>	<i>everyone</i>	The initiative helps fund research for cheaper and more effective pollution control technologies. The effort to make business more environment-friendly and environmentalism more business-friendly should be applauded by all. (HR 2099)
REPEALING CLEAN WATER STANDARDS	<i>water polluters, such as the chemical industry</i>	<i>anyone who fishes, swims, or drinks water</i>	The GOP's appropriation bill for the EPA would eliminate restrictions on dumping raw sewage and stormwater runoff, two of the most dangerous causes of pollution. The regulations are relatively inexpensive, but have dramatically improved the country's water quality. More than one-half of all U.S. rivers now meet the Clean Water Act's standards. In 1970, only one-fourth did. (HR 2099)
LOWERING FDA APPROVAL STANDARDS	<i>drug companies</i>	<i>sick people</i>	The proposal would lower approval standards on drugs and medical devices to the levels employed by France, Germany, and England. The U.S. has the highest standards in the world; it also has the fewest recalls of unsafe drugs of any major Western country.
SHELVING THE NEW MEAT INSPECTION REGULATIONS	<i>the meat packing industry, bacteria</i>	<i>anyone who eats meat, or cares about someone who does</i>	After decades of "look and sniff" meat inspection, the USDA had finally devised a more sophisticated method and new regulations, which would help prevent the spread of the E. coli virus, which kills more than 500 Americans annually, most of whom are children or elderly. The GOP would derail the new inspection methods and standards because of the "burden" it would place on the meat packing industry, instead relying on methods that haven't been updated since 1906.

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PRIVATIZING THE FDA'S DRUG APPROVAL PROCESS	<i>drug companies</i>	<i>drug takers</i>	True, the FDA could be speedier when it comes to approving drugs, especially when the drug addresses an urgent need. But this proposal would turn the hen-house to an industry panel of foxes. Needless to say, the pharmaceutical industry has much to gain from rushing drugs onto the market.
GUTTING MEDICARE	<i>the wealthy, whose tax cut this funds</i>	<i>the elderly</i>	Two years ago, the GOP scorched the earth claiming, inaccurately, that Clinton's health care plan would push everyone into HMOs. Now, they hope to cut Medicare by over \$200 billion by doing just that. (104-159). See "The Medicare Solution," page 33.

Reaching Out: Republicans Who Might Make a Difference...

It is crucial in the coming days that Democrats chip away at Republican unity by reaching out to moderate Republicans. What follows is a list of those Republicans who might be convinced to rebel against at least some of their party's excesses.

Senate

Nancy Kassebaum, KS
John Chafee, RI
William Cohen, ME
Mark Hatfield, OR
James Jeffords, VT
William Roth, DE
Olympia Snowe, ME
Arlen Specter, PA

Jennifer Dunn, WA
Vernon Ehlers, MI
Robert Ehrlich, Jr, MD
Harris Fawell, IL
Mark Foley, FL
Tillie Fowler, FL
Bob Franks, NJ
Rodney Frelinghuysen, NJ
Greg Ganske, IA
Wayne Gilchrest, MD
James Greenwood, PA
Steve Gunderson, WI
David Hobson, OH
Martin Hoke, OH
Steve Horn, CA
Amo Houghton, NY
Nancy Johnson, CT

Sue Kelly, NY
Jim Kolbe, AZ
Rick Lazio, NY
Jim Leach, IA
Jim Ross Lightfoot, IA
Ron Lewis, KY
James Longley, Jr., ME
Jim McCrery, LA
Jan Meyers, KS
Susan Molinari, NY
Constance Morella, MD
Ralph Regula, OH
Marge Roukema, NJ
Christopher Shays, CT
Bill Thomas, CA
Peter Torkildsen, MA
Fred Upton, MI

House of Representatives

Charles Bass, NH
Doug Bereuter, NE
Peter Blute, MA
Sherwood Boehlert, NY
Michael Castle, DE
William Clinger, PA

...And Democrats Who Chose Not To

The votes will be extremely close and the consequences grave. Without the full participation of Democratic congressmen, some harmful laws that could have been stopped will be passed. The GOP recently re-introduced 17 anti-environmental provisions to an appropriations bill just three days after they had been defeated. Had any one of these 11 absentees voted, the provisions would have been defeated. Instead, they all passed.

Xavier Becerra, CA
Floyd Flake, NY
Harold Ford, TN
Gene Green, TX

Tony Hall, OH
Joe Moakley, MA
Mel Reynolds, IL
Pete Stark, CA

Karen Thurman, FL
Walter Tucker, CA
Sidney Yates, IL

Make sure your congressman isn't absent without leave when the worst of the GOP proposals come to the floor.

The Medicare Solution

And why myths, misinformation and mudslinging—from both parties—won't get us there

BY TED MARMOR

Political amnesia—abandoning overnight the position you once staked your political capital on—is nothing new in Washington, but rarely have the reversals been as bold as in the recent debates over health care reform. Throughout the 1993 fight over Clinton's reform plan, Republicans kept Medicare off the table and proclaimed the horrors of managed care. This year, suddenly, they discovered the Medicare crisis. "The choice we face is simple," says Representative John Kasich. "We can either strengthen Medicare and preserve it for current and future beneficiaries, or we can do nothing ... and ensure Medicare's demise." And as a solution, they are trumpeting—you guessed it—managed care.

Democrats who advocated health care reform, meanwhile, are trying to stymie radical change this year by using dire rhetoric that also ends up feeding beneficiaries' fears. "Those who want to gamble with Medicare are asking Americans to bet their lives," President Clinton warned during a celebration of Medicare's 30th anniversary. Congressional Democrats have taken a page straight from Republican strategist Bill Kristol's health care playbook: Deny the problem's seriousness and block your opponents' solution.

For observers of health care politics, the images of politicians thriving on conflict—and journalists obligingly covering every jab and duck—evoke an unshakable sense of déjà vu. The target is narrower. The party in the driver's seat is different. Controlling the deficit, rather than expanding access, is the engine driving reform. But in many respects, the fight over Medicare is shaping up to be much like the last Congress's fight over health care reform. Even many of the same interest groups are squaring off with overblown rhetoric.

Irrational fears based on misinformation helped derail last year's debate. To prevent that this time around, a whole new set of Medicare myths needs debunking. For starters, Medicare doesn't need "saving" or "rescuing" or any of the other hyperbolic turns of phrase the press and politicians use to discuss the program's future. To borrow from

Ted Marmor, whose books include Understanding Health Care Reform (1994), teaches politics at the Yale School of Management. The second edition of his book The Politics of Medicare (1973) will be published next year by Aldine.