

is not about pandering to senior citizens. This is about helping families stay together.

Our plan also leaves more funds to invest in education from Head Start to helping our schools meet higher standards, not by telling them what to do but by saying, "Here are the standards and you figure out how to meet them, and we'll give you some money so you can do it;" by providing more affordable college loans and more college scholarships, not just because we're trying to help the young but because we're trying to provide for the future. And that's what we have to do.

Our plan leaves more money to invest in the environment because we know we've got to find a way to grow the economy and preserve the environment. Just last week there was a big story about something the Vice President's been saying for years and years and years. Last year was the hottest year on record, and we have got to find a way to keep growing the economy without burning up the atmospheric layer that protects us all. We've got to find a way to do it and still preserve the clean rivers that we fish in and the woods that we hunt in and the parks that we take our children to. It's a big issue. You've got to set aside something for that. And that's what we do.

The Medicaid program is the program that pays for middle class folks to send their parents to nursing homes so that they don't have to go totally bankrupt and their kids don't have to go totally bankrupt. It also pays for health care for poor children, including some children of working people who make very modest wages. We can make some savings there, but we've got to be careful how far we go. It also pays for care for middle class people who have disabled children. I bet there are people that work in this plant who have children with some sort of physical disability who get a little help through that program. That is an honorable and a decent thing to do.

Yes, we need to control medical inflation, but we have to do it in a way that leaves that intact. Why? Because we are stronger when we are working together than we are when we just cut everybody loose. That is the issue: Are we going up or down together? Do we want a society where all can win, or are we satisfied with winner-take-all? America is best when everybody's winning as a team. That is what we are for. We are not for big Government in Washington. We're for a Government in Washington that

plays its part as your partner to see that everybody has a chance to win. That's what this whole budget debate is about.

As I said, to be fair to the Republican and the Democratic congressional leaders, we have sat together for 50 hours. And I thought the other day, you know, sometimes we fight with one another in these 50 hours, and they think I'm wrong and I think they're wrong. And here we are in Nashville; it reminds me of that old country song, "It's hard to soar like an eagle when I'm stuck with a turkey like you." [Laughter] Sometimes they think that about me. Sometimes I think that about them.

But we've tried to resolve our differences, and we've made a lot of progress. And here's where we are. They still want levels of reductions in Medicare and Medicaid and education and the environment that are not necessary to balance the budget. They admit they're not necessary to balance the budget. They sent me a letter saying that my plan balanced the budget. So there's no question that they're not necessary to balance the budget.

My plan strengthens the Medicare Trust Fund and gives more choice and more preventive benefits to older Americans and added help for families that are caring for loved ones with problems like Alzheimer's disease. But it will save money from the present system. We agree on that. But they want to go beyond that.

Their plan cuts Medicare more than it needs to be cut to balance the budget. And they would favor wealthier and healthier senior citizens at the expense of everybody else by giving them many more opportunities just to get out of the Medicare system. Well, the reason Medicare works is that everybody's in it, the sick and the healthy alike. You've got a great big pool that's low risk. And we can afford to run it, and you can afford to pay for it. So I just disagree with that.

Under their plan, older couples would pay \$400 more a year. Well, if you're making a good living, \$400 may not be very much. But there's a lot of retired people in the hills of Tennessee and rural Arkansas that \$400 is a whole bunch of money. And I simply don't think it's right for me to get a tax cut in my income bracket and then to charge them \$400 more a year. I just don't think it's right. If it were necessary to balance the budget, it would be all right. But it's not. It is not necessary to balance the budget. You know, where I come from, \$400