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For Immediate Release

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AFL-CIO Launches New TV and Radio Ads Highlighting Need to Strengthen Medicare and Add Prescription Drug Benefit

Says surplus should be used to shore up Medicare, Not give huge tax cuts to wealthy and big businesses

Washington, D.C., September 14— Tomorrow the 13 million member AFL-CIO will launch new television and radio ads urging members of Congress to strengthen Medicare and add a prescription drug benefit for seniors, and taking them to task for voting to spend the federal budget surplus on a $792 billion tax cut for the wealthy instead.

The ads, which will run in the districts of 13 House members and four Senators, tell members of Congress to "put working families first" by securing Medicare for the future and extending the program to help senior citizens pay for their prescriptions.

John Sweeney, AFL-CIO President said, "Congress needs to seize the opportunity to invest in the issues that really matter to working families — like strengthening Medicare — rather than wasting what little time is left in this session of Congress on go-nowhere issues like huge tax cuts for big business and the rich."

"While seniors all over the country struggle to choose between paying for groceries and paying for their prescriptions, it's outrageous that Congress is spending its time voting to give corporate fatcats a $3.8 billion tax write-off for their three-martini lunches," Sweeney continued.

The tax cut primarily benefits America's wealthy — seventy percent of the tax cut benefits go to the wealthiest 10 percent of taxpayers. Taxpayers with incomes of $301,000 or more get 42 percent of the tax cut. According to Citizens for Tax Justice, the richest one percent would receive the equivalent of $885 every week, while the average family would get three dollars a week under the Republican tax cut plan.

The cost of the tax breaks will explode from $792 billion in the first ten years to $2.6 trillion dollars by 2019 — just as Medicare becomes insolvent, Social Security surpluses begin to disappear and the Baby Boomers start to retire.

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The Republican tax package rests on assumptions that extraordinarily deep funding cuts — up to 43%, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities — will be made in programs like education and training, worker protections, and housing.

Corporate giants like General Motors, Lockheed Martin, Microsoft, Norfolk Southern, and Tyson foods receive lucrative new special tax incentives in the Republican package, which also provides a $3.8 billion boost in the business meal tax exemption.

Although the President has promised to veto the Republican tax plan, the Republican congressional leadership has indicated that they will continue to push for the tax cuts in the coming year.

Strengthening Medicare and prescription drug coverage for seniors is a top priority for the AFL-CIO and its unions. The AFL-CIO has launched a grassroots program to mobilize and educate union members from the 68 affiliated unions about the battle over Medicare. The mobilization campaign includes workplace flyer distribution, local rallies, education training sessions, and "Call Congress" campaigns.

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Ad Script for AFL-CIO "Voice"
:30 for TV

Visual	Voice
Interview with middle-age, working class woman sitting in waiting area of pharmacy; pharmacy scenes; back to woman in waiting area	"When I think about getting older, it's not dying I worry about. It's living and being buried under a pile of medical bills I can't pay for."
Elderly man paying for prescription; headline "Surplus may save Medicare."	With today's surplus, Congress could secure Medicare for the future, and extend it to help seniors pay for their prescriptions.
Pharmacy scenes; cg: X backed $792 billion tax cut for wealthy [Source: HR 2488; 7/22/99]	Instead, Congressman X voted to spend the surplus on a huge tax cut for the wealthy.
Headline: "Rich get richer under GOP tax plan"	
Call Congressman X 1-800-378-1844	Call X. Tell him, next time put working families first!
Back to interview with woman in pharmacy	"Is Medicare going to be there for us? I don't know."

Documentation for AFL-CIO "Voice" :30 for Television

Script	Documentation
"When I think about getting older; it's not dying I worry about. It's living and being buried under a pile of medical bills I can't pay for."	On average, seniors pay 21% of their household income to purchase health care — three times as much as younger citizens. Currently, the Medicare benefits package does not cover prescription drugs or long-term care — two extremely expensive health are costs. [Source: "Medicare: The Basics," Kaiser Family Foundation]
With today's surplus, Congress could secure Medicare for the future, and extend it to help seniors pay for their prescriptions.	The Clinton Administration has proposed devoting almost $400 billion of non-Social Security surpluses over the next ten years to strengthen Medicare and provide prescription drug coverage. [Source: White House Mid-Session Review of Proposed FY 2000 Budget]
[Headline: "Surplus may save Medicare"]	[Source: The Herald, 6/29/99]
Instead, Congressman X voted to spend the surplus on a huge tax cut for the wealthy. [cg: X backed $792 billion tax cut for wealthy.	The Republican leadership's tax bill, however, uses all non-Social Security surpluses over the next ten years to pay for $792 billion in tax cuts. [Source: H.R. 2488, 7/22/99]
Headline: "Rich get richer under GOP tax plan"]	[Source: Charleston Gazette, 7/24/99]
	According to Citizens for Tax Justice, "two-thirds of the Republican tax cuts will go to the top ten percent of all taxpayers. The richest one percent of taxpayers will receive an average annual tax cut of some $46,000 each. For families in the middle of the income scale and below, the average tax cut, when everything is fully in place, is only about $160." [Source: Citizens for Tax Justice Website — see attached]

The Treasury Department's analysis of H.R. 2488 found that 78.1% of the benefits in the House Republican's tax plan, when fully implemented, would go to families with incomes exceeding $100,767.
[Source: Wall Street Journal, 7/23/99]

"Is Medicare going to be there for us? I don't know."

The aging of the population and the Baby Boom retirement explosion beginning in 2010 will put a heavy strain on the Medicare system. Unless additional funds are dedicated to strengthen the program, in 2015, Medicare will no longer be able to pay full benefits to its beneficiaries.
[Source: "The President's Plan to Modernize and Strengthen Medicare for the 21st Century," National Economic Council, Domestic Policy Council]