Questions for House Democrats on the Medicare Trigger

- Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Chairman Pete Stark has publicly stated that "Medicare is not in crisis." Yet the Medicare program faces unfunded liabilities of $86 trillion—***more than 70 times*** the total anticipated losses from subprime mortgages worldwide. Why do House Democrats believe that a $1.2 trillion "crisis" requires the creation of massive new government programs to help borrowers, while $86 trillion in debt from an existing government program warrants no action at all?

- Democrats have complained that the trigger is an "arbitrary" calculation of the health of the Medicare program. Since they find Medicare's $86 trillion in unfunded obligations an "arbitrary" figure too low to prompt any concern, how high will Medicare's expected losses have to rise before Democrats will take action? $100 trillion? $200 trillion?

- "Fixing" the Medicare trigger this year requires finding less than $2 billion in savings during Fiscal Year 2013—this for a program projected to grow over the next five years from $455 billion to $636 billion in spending. Do Democrats really believe that nothing can be done to reduce Medicare's growth in spending from $181 billion to a mere $179 billion over the next five years?

- Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman John Dingell recently commented that Democrats are "going to try to be fiscally responsible…especially on matters of health care." How fiscally responsible is failing to find even $2 billion in savings from a program with $86 trillion in unfunded obligations?

- At a recent House Appropriations Committee markup, attempts to attach language creating a bipartisan commission to examine entitlement spending and make recommendations to Congress was defeated on a largely party-line vote. Why do most House Democrats oppose even creating a commission to study the nation's impending fiscal crisis due to unsustainable entitlement spending?

- Why do House Democrats believe that wealthy seniors—including billionaires like Warren Buffett and George Soros—should not be asked to pay $2 per day more in premiums for their prescription drug coverage to help improve the solvency of the Medicare program?

- Why would House Democrats embark on a new $35 billion expansion of children's health insurance—paid for by tax increases—without first ensuring the solvency of the existing Medicare benefit?

- A House Democratic aide recently said that the party's advice to frustrated families dealing with high gas prices consisted of "Drive small cars and wait for the wind." What will Democrats tell seniors and those individuals looking to retire when the Medicare Hospital Trust Fund goes broke just over a decade from now?

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