

Forbes talks to seniors

Rep. says ignore scare tactics on Social Security



Nancy Britt poses a question to U.S. Rep. J. Randy Forbes, R-Va.



PATRICK KANE/PROGRESS-INDEX PHOTOS

U.S. Rep. J. Randy Forbes, R-Va., speaks at a senior listening session to discuss Medicare, Social Security and other topics Wednesday morning at Tyler's Retreat at Iron Bridge in Chester.

BY MARKUS SCHMIDT
STAFF WRITER

CHESTERFIELD — U.S. Rep. Randy Forbes, R-Va., just wrapped up his listening tour in the Fourth Congressional District this week, hosting several town halls and meetings with business leaders and educators.

At a visit of Tyler's Retreat in Chester on Wednesday, Forbes advised

senior citizens to not believe scare tactics from both sides of the political aisle predicting the end of Social Security and Medicare.

"Most of this is driven by people who want to scare you to death," Forbes said. "You are going to be bombarded by people who'll tell you that you will lose your Social Security," he said.

Many seniors are concerned because of warnings issued repeatedly by the Social Security Administration that the trust fund will likely run out of money in 2036.

Now there is reason to believe that it could run dry even sooner, since the Congressional Budget Office has announced that by 2020, the combined

Please see FORBES, Page A11

FORBES

Continued from Page A1

Social Security old age and disability trust funds will be \$800 billion smaller than what the Social Security Administration projected last year. Budget discussions about spending cuts have fueled this concern.

But Forbes told seniors to not be frightened by these conversations. "There is no legitimate discussion about this in Congress. It's just not going to happen for anybody in his this room," he said. "But every time the government gets us deeper in debt, everything will be put on the table," Forbes said.

Forbes said that while seniors may be on the safe side, young people will have a tougher time. "In 2026, Social Security will be in trouble if don't stabilize the process. That is going to be a challenge," he said.

Forbes said Washington's priority must be to get the debt under control. While the U.S. debt has fallen 0.4 percent this year as the economy has shown signs of improvement, the country's debt still is above a staggering \$15 trillion.

"The debt clock keeps on running," Forbes said. "It's common sense — you can't spend more money than what you make."

Forbes said that every child in America already is \$48,000 in debt. "This is killing their jobs and opportunities for the future," Forbes said. "It concerns me when parents in the most powerful nation in the world say we're concerned that our children will not have the same quality of life as we do," he said.

In spite of economic hardships, Forbes still pushed for a strong national defense. "We need a strong military — but we are going to decimate our military budget," Forbes said, referring to President Barack Obama's plan to shave almost \$487 billion from the Pentagon budget over the coming decade.

As these looming spending cuts force the Pentagon



PATRICK KANE/PROGRESS-INDEX PHOTO

Aide Rick Franklin holds a microphone as Celeste Busby asks a question. U.S. Rep. J. Randy Forbes, R-Va., hosted a senior listening session to discuss Medicare, Social Security and other topics Wednesday morning at Tyler's Retreat at Iron Bridge in Chester.

to plan for a smaller U.S. Navy, China is accelerating the launch of new warships as part of a sustained drive to become a major maritime power — an effort that leaves Forbes, an expert on Chinese relations, concerned.

"This is the first time that the Chinese have more ships than us," Forbes said. "They are building up their navy, we are building ours down," he said.

In its annual report to Congress on the Chinese military, the Pentagon last year said that the People's Liberation Army now has about 75 major warships, more than 60 submarines, 55 medium and heavy amphibious ships and about 85 smaller, missile-armed fast attack craft.

Today, the U.S. Navy's 285-strong fleet includes 11 aircraft carriers, more than 70 nuclear powered submarines and 22 cruisers. But military strategists dismiss crude comparisons between navies based on the number of ships alone and most experts agree that the U.S. remains the world's dominant navy.

Forbes said that as America's premiere creditor, China builds up its military with American money. "The interest that we pay China every week will buy them

three stealth fighters and it still leaves them with \$50 million," Forbes said.

• Markus Schmidt may be reached at 804-722-5172 or mmschmidt@progress-index.com.