

COMMONSENSE HEALTH CARE REFORM

(Mr. FORTENBERRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, Terry recently wrote me, "Congressman, I can buy a car in Iowa, beer in Kansas, a fishing license in South Dakota, land in Colorado, but health insurance? No place but Nebraska."

Mr. Speaker, in these difficult times people are hurting. Families, and especially seniors, need more affordable options, from what they put on their table to what they put in their medicine cabinets.

My constituent, Terry, pointed out a commonsense reform—purchasing health insurance across State lines. There are other reforms, such as appropriately addressing preexisting conditions, promoting a culture of health and wellness to drive down costs, creating new insurance risk pool models for small businesses and families, strengthening community health centers, and expanding opportunities for health savings accounts. These changes could mark a truly bipartisan policy effort that increases competition among health insurance companies and benefits all Americans.

REFORM HEALTH CARE NOW

(Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the President said our health care is too costly. I agree. But the Democrat plan doesn't reform or eliminate the \$1 trillion in waste, so you will pay more—not just your children or your grandchildren, but you. How? Their plan has a wheelchair tax, a hospital bed tax, asthma device tax, artificial hip tax. Diabetes supplies, medicines, home oxygen equipment, all taxed. Have a heart attack? There's taxes on heart monitors, heart valves and pacemakers. How about health insurance? They tax you if you have it and tax you if you don't. Employer paid insurance? They tax them if they will and they tax them if they won't. States can opt out of the government-run plan, but you still have to pay the taxes. It's taxation without hospitalization.

Let's reform Medicare, reform Medicaid, reform health care, cut the waste, improve quality, let people buy across State lines, join groups, make insurance personal, portable, permanent. Millions of Americans are begging us to fix the problems, not finance them. Millions of Americans can't all be wrong.

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HEALTH CARE

(Mr. WILSON of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of liability reform.

I have heard from people all across my district in Ohio about how much they need health insurance reform. I have heard from Dawn, a small business owner who has a story that is truly heartbreaking.

Due to a doctor's mistake when her son was 23 days old, Dawn's son was left with lifelong brain damage. For the past 10 years, she and her husband have struggled to find insurance for her son. When no insurance would cover him, they were forced to pay out of pocket for all of his doctors' appointments, physical therapy, and they are currently living at the poverty level. Between the two of them, they have held as many as five jobs to try to cover their son's medical expenses.

Last year, in my district in Ohio, there were 1,270 health care-related bankruptcies. Without comprehensive health care insurance reform, Dawn's family could be the next one.

We are at a breaking point. We must come together and bring security and stability to our health care system for families like Dawn's and for everyone else in this country.

HEALTH CARE

(Mr. WHITFIELD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WHITFIELD. Mr. Speaker, there are many provisions of the Democratic health care bill that we support, like taking care of the preexisting condition problem.

But we also oppose cutting Medicare by \$500 billion over 10 years. We oppose taking \$155 billion out of the hospital account. We oppose reducing Medicare Advantage by \$123 billion. We oppose taxing, putting a surtax on small business men and women, thousands of them. We oppose individuals being penalized 2.5 percent of their gross income if they do not buy a policy. We oppose requiring employers to pay 8 percent of the gross wages of their employees if they do not provide insurance. Then, after all of that, there still is \$200 billion needed to pay for this expensive health care bill.

Those on this side of the aisle are willing to work with the other side of the aisle if they would simply open the door and give us the opportunity.

HEALTH CARE

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I respect a great deal my colleague from Kentucky who is on the Energy and Commerce Committee, but I heard him mostly talk about what he opposes.

That's the problem with the Republican mantra on health care reform. They are opposed to so many things, but we really don't know what they are

supportive of. The fact of the matter is from the very beginning we tried to include both sides of the aisle on this health care reform, but essentially what we heard from the Republican side was they didn't like this, they didn't like that, and, ultimately, they didn't like anything.

Now we are forced, I suppose, to bring a bill to the floor which probably will get mostly or maybe only Democratic support, but it will cover everyone. It will provide that universal health care that has been so lacking with so many people now who can't find health insurance or find it increasingly unaffordable. The public option is a very important part of that, because basically it will create competition and bring down costs for the average American.

We are moving forward now. We would like to have bipartisan support. But if we don't, we are still moving forward, because we know that the promise of health care for every American is really crucial.

PROTECTING AMERICAN SENIORS

(Mrs. MILLER of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, as Democratic leaders retreat behind closed doors to craft their government takeover of health care, American seniors are rightly concerned about what \$500 billion in cuts in Medicare will mean to them.

Throughout this process, Democrats have made clear that they intend to force American seniors to carry a large share of the cost of reform, and this includes eliminating Medicare Advantage. Democrats understand how negative the reaction will be when seniors learn that they are scrapping this program, so they have placed a gag order on companies that provide this coverage, stopping them from communicating with seniors on the ramifications of this change.

That's right, the Democrats who promised transparency and accountability have gone behind closed doors to craft legislation and have used the power of government to stop dissenters from communicating with American seniors. Well, American seniors are right to be concerned.

With the job-killing tax increases the Democrats are also talking about, American workers need to be concerned as well, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps that is why the Democrat majority will not allow us to have 72 hours to read the bill before it's voted on.

HEALTH CARE

(Mr. ROSKAM asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, if you are from the northwest suburbs of Chicago, today you woke up and you

looked at the Chicago Tribune and you read an article that said your property taxes are going to go up 20 percent. If you turned on the radio, you probably heard folks talking in Chicagoland about unemployment at 10.5 percent in Illinois, a number that we have not seen since the early 1980s. If you have been listening to the debate in Washington, D.C., in the past couple of weeks, you have been hearing about this crushing debt that is coming on you, your children, and your grandchildren.

I went this afternoon to the Bureau of the Public Debt in downtown Washington and watched within a twinkling of an eye \$44 billion that was borrowed on a 2-year note. That type of attitude and the attitude of spending and spending and spending is becoming weary for the folks that I represent in the Sixth District of Illinois.

It's time for this Congress to discipline itself and come up with a health care plan that meets people's needs but doesn't break the bank.

HEALTH CARE

(Mr. CULBERSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Speaker, the people in Texas that I represent oppose the Pelosi-Obama government takeover health care bill by a margin of 77 percent because we understand in Texas that our health care system needs a tune-up, not a trade-in. We need to focus, as the conservative minority has, on reducing the cost of health insurance and making it affordable and portable.

We, in the conservative minority, the temporary minority, have authored legislation that will make insurance portable across State lines, that will bring down the cost of health insurance by enacting tort reforms nationwide to protect doctors from frivolous litigation as we did in Texas. In Texas, we adopted tort reform, and the cost of health insurance dropped for all Texans, and about 400,000 additional Texans got health insurance who could not before.

We need to make sure that the greatest health care system ever created in the history of the world is protected, that we protect the doctor-patient relationship. Let's focus on reducing the cost of health insurance, making it affordable and portable.

Give our health care system a tune-up, not a trade-in.

GOVERNMENTAL TAKEOVER OF HEALTH CARE AND THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT IT WILL HAVE ON OUR SENIORS

(Mr. BROWN of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the

Democrats' plan to pay for their government takeover of health care by cutting nearly \$162 billion of Medicare at the expense of our seniors.

Across the Nation, nearly 11 million seniors chose Medicare Advantage plans as their preferred coverage. Of those 11 million, over 11,000 seniors in the First District of South Carolina, an area with many retirees, may have their coverage dropped or benefits cut if the Democrats have it their way.

Despite the President's promise that if you like your current plan you can keep it, it is clear that some seniors will eventually be forced into a government-run plan. Additionally, the CBO has said that the Democrats' plan will increase seniors' Medicare prescription drug costs by 20 percent over the next decade.

As Medicare dangerously approaches bankruptcy, Democrats must open the process up to Republicans to work to repair this rapidly failing program and protect our seniors from rising drug costs, limited coverage, and reduced quality of care. Republicans vow to honor our seniors by blocking Washington's bureaucrats from overregulating their health care and by providing options and the best quality coverage for all Americans.

HEALTH CARE

(Mr. OLSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues in the majority have repeatedly promised that under their public option plan, individuals can keep the coverage they currently have and nothing will change except they will have more choices at a lower cost.

As I speak with employers and small businesses in my district, the truth is vastly different. Several employers in the district I represent have candidly stated that dropping private insurance for employees, instead of paying a mandatory 8 percent surtax, makes the most economic sense for their business. Employees will no longer have the choice to keep the coverage they currently have under this scenario.

Raising taxes, eliminating choices for Americans, and placing the government in charge of health care, that hardly strikes me as a choice. The hardworking Americans in the 22nd District of Texas and cities and towns across America were promised a choice.

I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, where is the choice in this government-mandated care?

HEALTH CARE

(Mrs. LUMMIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. LUMMIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express what is my greatest

hope and my greatest concern in 1 minute.

My greatest concern is that, by using Medicare as a means to fund this new program, you will be taking more money away from rural areas that are already inadequately reimbursed by Medicare for their costs. For example, in Casper, Wyoming, the hospital is only reimbursed at 32 cents on the dollar for Medicare actual costs.

We are underreimbursing now and having to subsidize Medicare. The government is not meeting its obligation to Medicare. My greatest hope is that Democrats will read the 40-plus Republican bills to reform health care and choose the best among them and bring those to the floor so we can discuss them and debate them.

We have over 40 bills that you can use for great ideas to reform health care in a way that will make it available to all Americans.

HEALTH CARE

(Mr. ROHRABACHER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, there are 20 million uninsured Americans who just can't afford insurance, others who have lost insurance when they lost their jobs. Still others have a preexisting insurance condition and have been frozen out of the insurance market. Then there are frivolous lawsuits which drain very limited health care dollars. Of course, we find that our best insurance providers can't sell their insurance across the country. They are frozen out. There is no competition.

These are problems that Republicans are anxious to work with Democrats on. I plead with my Democratic colleagues, don't hold health care reform hostage, dependent on the enactment of some socialistic experiment with government-run health care.

What's going to happen? What's being demanded here is a transformation of our system rather than a reform of our system. That transformation of our system will hurt seniors. It will take people who now have insurance in small business and put them out of a job as well as with no insurance. Of course, it will not improve the situation but will be very costly for the American people.

SENIOR CITIZENS' MEDICARE COVERAGE

(Mr. FRANKS of Arizona asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, it is so ironic that this Congress is debating the means of covering the uninsured while Democrats are planning to cut the existing coverage of those who need it most—our senior citizens.

Nearly 70,000 of those senior citizens will be affected and live in my district,