

over half of these medical bankruptcies impact a woman.

□ 1730

When we pass this legislation, we will put an end to the annual and lifetime limits on coverage that many insurance companies currently impose on people. And we will put an end to bankruptcies caused by medical debt. No longer will families have to raid their savings for a home purchase or college tuition because someone falls ill.

Finally, as a mother and a grandmother, I couldn't be more thrilled by the steps we will take to improve health care coverage for our country's most precious resource, our children. We will ensure that the Children's Health Insurance Program will thrive. We will ensure that services like vision and dental care for children are automatically included in all health care plans. When the bill is signed into law, that very day it will immediately prevent health insurers from imposing preexisting condition exclusions on children. And it will immediately allow young adults to remain on their parents' health insurance plan until their mid-20s so they aren't forced to forego health coverage after college graduation.

So I urge all of my colleagues to support our efforts in health care reform with the knowledge of how it will help the women in their lives and in their communities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICANS DESERVE BETTER THAN OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to respectfully ask that my colleagues reject ObamaCare which, if enacted into law, will seriously undermine, erode, damage and, I believe, even destroy health care in America.

On substance, the Senate-passed text of over 2,700 pages now pending in the House is egregiously flawed. This is truly a bad bill, and it is anything but reform.

On process, the near total lack of transparency and the misuse of majority party power to ram ObamaCare through the Congress makes it the quintessential example of what is so dreadfully wrong in Washington.

No wonder growing numbers of Americans are fed up, losing faith, and angry at the Democrat-controlled Congress and the White House. No wonder mil-

lions of people, including TEA Party activists, are demanding accountability and defeat of ObamaCare.

This has been, and is, an unseemly process unworthy of a national legislature, any legislature for that matter, especially one with an enviable two-century-old history of lawmaking.

If President Obama wins passage of this bill when it comes to a vote, it will be a Pyrrhic victory at best. This is not Congress' finest hour.

Rest assure that if ObamaCare was sound and prudent policy fiscally and morally and an efficacious way of facilitating quality health care coverage, Members of both sides of the aisle and across the ideological spectrum would be lining up to support it. If this was a good bill, persuasion rather than pressure would convince a large majority of Members to embrace it.

Instead, blunt force is being applied like a vice grip to convince the unconvinced and undecided to cave, conform, and capitulate.

On cost, ObamaCare is riddled with accounting gimmicks, all designed to make the total price appear smaller than it really is.

In order to avoid sticker shock, ObamaCare collects new taxes, fees, and shifts billions of dollars from Medicare for 4 full years before benefits kick in. This trick results in an estimated but grossly misleading cost of care at some \$871 billion over 10 years. But when 10 years of revenue are matched with 10 years of benefits, the real cost comes to a staggering \$2.3 trillion.

I would note parenthetically that ObamaCare will exacerbate ObamaDebt. When you eliminate double counting of Medicare costs, Social Security cuts, and the use of CLASS Act premiums, the Democrats' claims of deficit reduction disappears into another massive wave of red ink of some \$460 billion over 10 years and \$1.4 trillion over the second 10 years.

Even without passage of this bill, under the President's 2011 budget proposal Federal spending will increase to a record \$3.8 trillion in 2011 alone. By 2020, the President's own 10-year budget analysis projects a more than doubling of debt to a record \$18.6 trillion. That is absolutely unsustainable.

Because ObamaCare diverts \$500 billion from Medicare, there is no doubt whatsoever that senior citizens and disabled persons will lose certain health benefits they now enjoy.

Medicare Advantage is protected in Florida, the so-called "Gatorade" fix, but not in my home State of New Jersey or anywhere else. Medicare Advantage is used by over 11 million people nationwide, including 15,983 people in my congressional district alone.

The Senate bill slashes nearly \$120 billion from Medicare Advantage plans, jeopardizing millions of seniors' existing coverage. So much for the President's promise that if you like your health plan, you can keep it. No, you can't. Not under this bill.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever, ObamaCare forces Americans to acquire an approved health care plan or pay a stiff penalty, like they have somehow committed a crime. The penalty is huge: the greater of \$750 per person up to \$2,250 per family, or 2 percent of household income. No person in America should be coerced into buying medical insurance.

Under ObamaCare, premiums for nongroup family insurance will increase by as much as \$2,000 per year. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that by 2016, premiums will increase by 10 to 30 percent over what would have happened under current law.

ObamaCare would also create 160 boards, commissions, and programs which would vest sweeping powers on bureaucrats to determine what benefits are covered and not, and at what cost.

Last September, Mr. Speaker, President Obama stood a mere 20 feet away from where I am standing now and told a joint session of Congress that, "no Federal dollars will be used to fund abortions, and Federal conscience laws will remain in place."

Mr. Speaker, I ask members to vote "no" on this bill when it comes to the floor.

This legislation today constitutes the largest expansion of abortion since Roe v. Wade itself, and makes a mockery of that pledge. That means more dead babies and wounded mothers.

Additionally, Obamacare fails to institute real medical liability reforms to end junk lawsuits and curb the costs of defensive medicine—these have long been identified as significant forces in driving up health costs.

The goal of responsible health care reform should be to provide credible health insurance coverage for everyone, strengthening the health care safety net so that no one is left out, and incentivizing quality and innovation, as well as healthy behaviors and prevention. This means that the current private health insurance market will have to be reformed to put patients first, and to eliminate denials of preexisting conditions and lifetime caps and promoting portability between jobs and geographic areas, including across state lines. The tax code should be modernized to promote affordability and individual control, provide assistance to low-income and middle-class families. Medicare requires reform to be more efficient and responsive, with sustainable payment rates.

Of course, responsible health care reform will respect basic principles of justice: it will put patients and their doctors in charge of medical decisions not insurance companies or government bureaucrats. It will also ensure that the lives and health of all persons are respected regardless of stage of development, age or disability.

It's time to go back to the drawing board and address what's broken and fix it.

The American public deserve better than what's on the table.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. WAMP) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WAMP. Mr. Speaker, this is a defining week in the history of this Republic. At no time in history has the Federal legislature mandated that everyone in this country buy anything; yet this week we are going to mandate, if this bill passes and is enacted into law, that everyone in this country under the force of law has to buy health insurance.

The Founding Fathers are rolling over in their graves today because they knew that we should be leery of a large central government mandating things to even the States that they have to comply with. They told us to have a healthy distrust of Big Brother, the Federal Government. They told us basically to sleep with one eye open and one eye closed because our freedoms could be at risk from within. We are at that moment in the history of this great Nation, and we must stand strong and resolute.

In Tennessee where I live, our Democratic Governor, Phil Bredesen, has called this the "mother of all unfunded mandates," because it forces all these new people into State Medicaid programs. In our State it is called TennCare. It is a multibillion dollar mandate to the people of Tennessee, and we don't have the money to pay for it. And we will not raise taxes to pay for it; we will not go into debt to pay for it. It is wrong for the States to be run over like this.

They carved out the 10th Amendment and gave States some sovereignty. There are liberal publications today writing that article VI allows the Federal Government to override the States. But that is on matters of equality and justice, not a decision of policy by the Federal legislature to mandate costs and taxes and debt on its people.

We must stand strong against this bill this week in the Congress. But if it is enacted into law, we must lead a repeal movement to immediately, as soon as possible, repeal this bill before it goes into effect. And then, if we are not able to repeal it, the Governors of this country should come out of their chairs and stand against this bill.

I will tell you, in Tennessee, if I am to become the 49th Governor of our great State, we will meet the Federal legislature and the Federal Government at the State line to oppose this mandate, because we will not raise taxes, we will not go into debt, we will not be violated like this. And we must let our Founding Fathers rest peacefully, knowing that these living laboratories of democracy, our States, are allowed to exist, setting our own taxes, setting our own rules, living in the United States but not being run over by the United States.

Mr. Speaker, this is a defining moment in the history of our country. We must be resolute. We must fight with every ounce of our energy to stop this Federal invasion and this overriding of States' rights.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. FOXX addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CUBA'S PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Orlando Zapata Tamayo, a prisoner of conscience who went on a hunger strike in one of the Cuban gulags, one of the many gulags that is full of political prisoners in that island prison of Cuba.

He went on a hunger strike to protest the multiple constant beatings that he was suffering under, that he and other political prisoners have to deal with on a constant basis. So he did, he went on a hunger strike. And after 80 days of being on a hunger strike, he passed away. He passed away after 80 days on February 28.

Right after that, another pro-democracy activist, very well known, another also former political prisoner named Guillermo Farinas, also began his own hunger strike. Mr. Speaker, he is still on a hunger strike today, 21 days after the death of Mr. Orlando Zapata Tamayo. He is already under very, very difficult circumstances. He is exceedingly frail, and his health is quickly deteriorating. But he is not stopping, again, to protest the conditions of the many political prisoners, but also to protest the lack of freedom, and to demand freedom for all political prisoners in Cuba and demand freedom for all who live on that enslaved island.

On March 11, Mr. Speaker, Felix Bonne announced that if and when Guillermo Farinas were to give his life in this hunger strike, that he would follow him; that he would be willing to give his life on a hunger strike to protest the conditions on the island, to protest the enslavement of all Cuban people, and the mistreatment of the political prisoners.

Today, March 17, 30 women known as the Ladies in White who go and protest peacefully in the streets of Havana,

and what they ask for is for the release of the political prisoners, of their relatives, their husbands, their sons, their brothers, today, 30 of them were thrown in prison. They were arrested, again, just because they were asking for the freedom of the political prisoners.

Today's march was led by Reina Zapata. She is the mother of Orlando Zapata Tamayo who, as I mentioned, died after 80 days on a hunger strike. Again, they were also arrested, taken away. Some of them had to be sent to the hospital because of the way that they were taken away.

And I mention this, Mr. Speaker, because it is important that the world understand that the people of Cuba are standing up, they are speaking out, they are protesting. They are protesting the conditions on the island, the lack of freedom, the oppression, the brutality of the Castro brothers who have been now the dictators on that island for over half a century.

So it is important that we also stand up and speak out, that we stand side by side with those in Cuba who are giving their all, including their lives, in the cause of freedom.

I know that there are some who still believe that it is okay to excuse those horrors; that we should try to make a buck, if we can, from that regime, with that regime at the expense of the suffering of the Cuban people. But, Mr. Speaker, as you know, there is no more noble people than the American people, which is why the vast majority stand side by side with the suffering of the Cubans, with the cause of a free Cuba.

So it is important that we remember as we debate and as we speak and as we live in freedom that just 90 miles away from the shores of the United States there are people who are suffering and who are dying for the cause of freedom. Mr. Speaker, we stand with them, we admire them, we support them. And we know that that cause will not be in vain, that their deaths will not be in vain, and that Cuba will be free.

□ 1745

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, there's a motto inscribed on Nebraska's State Capitol. It says, "The Salvation of the State is Watchfulness in the Citizen." Mr. Speaker, Nebraskans and all Americans are watching this health care debate. Frankly, I think they're growing tired—tired of the backroom dealing, tired of the abuse of the legislative process, and tired of the unwillingness of this body to craft the right policy for our country.

Overall, Nebraskans, and I assume most Americans, want a good health care bill, one that truly strengthens