

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

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

THE REPEAL OF HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the time for this Special Order of 1 hour to discuss the repeal of health care. And this legislation which passed today is the triumph of the Republican victory in the elections. And the Republicans ran on a campaign platform of repealing ObamaCare, as it was called and vilified, and today accomplished that goal.

ObamaCare became a vilification of health care, really a caricature of what was in the bill. It became a million different bad things to a million different people. But the moment the campaign is over and the partisan political points have been put on the board, each of us who has been elected, Republican or Democrat, has the responsibility to use our office to make pragmatic progress for the American people.

And the purpose of our Special Order tonight is to explain in concrete detail what the American people lost and will lose if the repeal is ultimately successful. We have a number of my colleagues here to join us. And to start it off for us is one of the senior members of the Energy and Commerce Committee, a leader in health care reform and elements of the health care reform that have broad bipartisan support, Representative ESHOO from California. I yield her such time as she may consume.

Ms. ESHOO. I thank my colleague for organizing this evening. And I rise to talk to whomever is tuned in this evening to tell some stories. I think stories are really what relate more than anything else to what is going on in the lives of our constituents and the American people.

I want to take people back several years. It was 1996. I was a fairly new member of the Energy and Commerce Committee. And after having had meetings in my district with people in the disabled community, I learned something that I didn't know, and I shared it with many other Members of Congress. They were not aware of it. I don't think the general public was aware of it. And it was the following. And that is that buried in the fine print of insurance policies, in this case health insurance policies, was a cap on lifetime limits of benefits.

Now, that doesn't sound too menacing to begin with. But just think if any one of us, God forbid, were in a horrible automobile accident. We have

seen what has happened to our colleague in Tucson, and the bills that are attendant to that kind of high-end of health care.

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Certainly people in the disabled community understood this very well. So the more I probed, the more I learned.

Meanwhile, the actor, wonderful, optimistic and superb actor, Christopher Reeve, had endured a terrible, terrible accident as an equestrian. I think everyone remembers that; and they remember the courageous battle that he waged, not only for more research to be invested in our country, but the hope that stem cell research held. But he also understood this whole issue of limits in an insurance policy on total benefits that would be paid for by the insurance company.

And so it was at that time, 1996, that I introduced legislation to lift the lifetime limit on the caps, on the ceiling in health insurance policies. That effort has been going on since 1996. In 2010, the Democrats saw fit to place that legislation into the health reform bill that has become law.

So today, the law of the land right now, January 19, 2011, at 7:10 p.m. eastern standard time, no one has a limit on their benefits in their life insurance policies. So if someone is in a terrible accident, that won't be held against them. If someone has a chronic illness, a chronic illness with cancer, with whatever one might name, that will not be held against them.

I tell this story because we have heard some tall tales, some tall tales about what the health care legislation, now the law, contained. More than anything else, what the legislation is about is addressing what happens to people in their day-to-day lives, the stories that our constituents have told us.

I want to tell you another story. This is from Elaine from the town of Los Altos, California, in my district. This is what she wrote to me: "This is the first time I have ever written to any government representative on any topic in my 50 years of existence." Elaine was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2006. It's a disease that we are all, all too familiar with. One in eight women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime.

Elaine wrote: "Normally, when I feel that a service provider is price gouging or in any way treating me unfairly, I take my business elsewhere. This is what I did with my auto insurance, and this is how market forces are supposed to work."

But Elaine couldn't do that because so few insurers would even take her. Most of them would not go near her.

The health insurance market, in my view, in so many of my constituents' view, has really failed our country.

We believe in markets. We believe in strong markets. We believe in competitive markets, but we don't believe that a market should be part of crushing

human beings in terms of the rules that they write.

Elaine saw her rates increase by 94 percent over a 13-month period.

Let me repeat this: Elaine saw her rates increase by 94 percent over a 13-month period.

What Member of Congress can endure this?

And I have to say that those that have fought the hardest against this bill, now the law, are taking their health care coverage from the government as a government employee.

Now, I am proud to be part of my government. I will never run away from that. I am proud of what I do. I am proud of my profession. I always want to be uplifting to it. But I don't think that there is room for hypocrisy in this. These are great needs. Yes, Members of Congress have insurance coverage. And the way that we designed the bill was so that the American people could get what we have, to get what we have.

Look and listen to what Elaine is saying. Elaine's gross income increased only 4 percent as her insurance rates increased by 94 percent over a 13-month period. I don't think that this is sustainable, not for any working person in this country, not for any community and certainly not for our Nation and our national economy.

Health care represents a major sector of our national economy, and if we don't do something, as we did, about the rising, spiraling costs and the effect that it has on families and individuals, it will really tear them apart and bring them to their knees financially. So I am very proud of the vote that I cast on behalf of my constituents.

Was the bill complicated? Absolutely. For those that say it was a long bill, they have voted for plenty of trade bills around here, and the trade bills are 4,000 pages. I wonder if they have read that.

But this one, this one lands in the middle of a family so that they don't have the panic at night or the cap on the benefits if they are in a terrible accident, like Christopher Reeve, God rest his soul, or Elaine, in my district, that told her story to me.

Elaine's health is not a commodity that can be bought or sold on the open market. She doesn't have the option to go without health insurance if prices get too high. For Elaine, this is an issue of life or death.

So today I found it to be a rather sad day that any Member of Congress would stand on this floor and, with a sense of glee, say we are going to repeal the progress that America made.

For the first time in the history of our country, the Congress passed comprehensive health reform for every single American. That, to me, is a great source of pride. I think it is to Elaine; and I think if Christopher Reeve were here, he would say "bravo" as well.

So thank you to my colleague, Mr. WELCH, to all of my colleagues that care so much about this that have