

responsible leadership. They want a bipartisan effort to deal with this challenge of rising costs of health insurance and health care. And they want bipartisan, responsible leadership in looking to ways to make health insurance and health care available to more people.

The legislation they are considering doesn't do that. Instead, it busts the budget of our country. Yesterday's election results in Massachusetts calls for a new direction in health care and in that debate. Many believe the election of Senator SCOTT BROWN lessens the likelihood of passage of the current proposal that has been crafted by Democratic leadership. If this is indeed the case, Democrats and Republicans must work together toward health care reform that reduces costs and expands insurance coverage without reducing costs or adding to the national debt, rationing care, or putting the Federal Government between the patient and their doctor.

One such bill to consider is H.R. 3970, the Medical Rights and Reform Act, of which I am a cosponsor. The Medical Rights and Reform Act includes fiscally responsible health care reforms like medical liability reform, small business insurance pooling, and letting families and businesses buy insurance across state lines. These are ideas at that have strong bipartisan support, but have been absent from the bicameral health care negotiations. Most important, the Medical Rights and Reform Act is fiscally responsible. This alternative does not raise taxes, cut Medicare, or add to the deficit. And it lowers health care costs.

This Congress already gave us a \$1.8 trillion debt. America cannot afford to spend another trillion dollars or \$2 trillion as proposed by the majority, and our families cannot afford to put life and death decisions in the hands of bureaucrats.

Mr. Speaker, resetting the health care debate and working together in an open and transparent way would help Washington regain the public's trust.

DEFICIT COMMISSION BY EXECUTIVE ORDER

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

Mr. WOLF. Today the press, Mr. Speaker, is reporting that a backroom deal has been cut with Democratic leadership to create a deficit cutting commission by executive order. I oppose this effort, and so will the American people.

In light of this news, the remarks that Representative LAMAR SMITH of Texas made on the House floor this morning ring truer and more urgent than ever. Representative SMITH offered a series of lessons to be learned

from yesterday's special Senate election in Massachusetts. He said all true reform starts with the voice of the people. The people will not have a choice in a deficit commission established by executive order. He also said common sense trumps partisanship. A commission through executive order negotiated by one party is the height of partisanship. He also said voters can exercise real independence. Where is the voice of the people in a process that will not go beyond the Beltway?

Mr. SMITH correctly noted that one-party control leads to arrogance. We are seeing today an arrogance of power on a party that forecloses the minority from a seat at the table. To be fair, the Republicans in the majority were arrogant at times. And Mr. SMITH concluded that we should be listening to the people, not defying them. The people of Massachusetts spoke yesterday. They proved that when the people get mad enough, anything is possible, even in Massachusetts. Lawmakers in Congress on both sides of the aisle would be wise to hear that message loud and clear, yet the Obama administration doesn't seem to be listening.

There are a number of serious problems being exposed as details of the administration's executive order commission are revealed. Any commission should be authentically bipartisan, passed by the Congress. Press reports indicate that instead of putting every spending program and tax policy on the table, discretionary spending would be exempt. How can we have an honest conversation about the Nation's financial health without looking at discretionary funds that accounted for more than 33 percent of Federal spending in '09?

The \$447 billion omnibus appropriations bill that was considered by Congress and signed into law in December corresponded with the Democrats' budget blueprint that increased non-defense discretionary spending by 12 percent over the previous year. When all appropriations spending is combined, the Democratic majority will have increased nondefense, non-veterans discretionary spending by 85 percent over the last 2 fiscal years. The American household has certainly not seen their income rise by 85 percent in recent years.

Simply put, discretionary spending, with the spending set by annual appropriations levels of Congress, matter. A deficit reduction commission that is barred from looking at one-third of the Federal budget is a fig leaf. The bipartisan commission process I have talked about for nearly 4 years puts everything, entitlements, tax policy, discretionary spending, everything on the table for discussion by the commission members.

Moreover, the American people will be cut out of the process under the President's plan. The SAFE Commis-

sion plan I have advocated for includes legitimate public engagement, mandating public town hall-style meetings. But under President Obama's plan the public voice will be nonexistent. There will be no input from the hardworking taxpayers in our communities. This is not the right way to form public policy.

Perhaps the most glaring sleight of hand, one I believe the American people will recognize and refute, is that the Democratic leadership intends to bring the commission recommendations up for a vote in Congress, but only after the mid-term elections and before the new Congress begins in 2011. It would be a lame duck vote.

Lawmakers who are retiring or get defeated could vote on a set of recommendations with regard to entitlement spending and tax policy, but never be held accountable by the American people. Is it right for outgoing Members of Congress to consider proposals that could affect every single American knowing that days and weeks later they would no longer be answerable to the voters of the district they once represented?

Between the Democrats and Republicans in both chambers, over 30 Members have already announced they are retiring or running for another office, and this number will grow. During the lame duck session, some outgoing Members may already be looking for new jobs, which could well be lobbying special interest groups and other stakeholders that have a vested interest in the outcome of the vote on the commission's recommendations. Yet the Obama administration is setting up a process that would allow these outgoing lawmakers to vote on the commission's recommendations and run the risk of blurring the lines between what is best for the American people and best for their future employer.

Any recommendation put forward should be considered by the newly elected Congress, which would have to publicly stand by their vote on the commission's recommendation. This Congress has run up the country's credit card to a point of no return, and now the administration wants to be able to tout a bipartisan solution to spending for political cover to survive the upcoming elections.

A commission through executive order is political gamesmanship. It is a blatant effort by the administration to find political cover after advocating for the \$787 billion economic stimulus, supporting health care reform being negotiated behind closed doors that could cost a trillion, and pushing other budget breakers that are wildly unpopular in the eyes of the American people.

In closing, the American people understand the depth of our financial problems. They recognize the spending gorge that Congress has embarked on since the Obama administration began,

and they will not be fooled about by a fig leaf commission established by executive order. Just ask the people of Massachusetts.

MARCH FOR LIFE

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the March for Life, which will take place this Friday, January 22nd. It marks the 37th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*. I will head to the march on Friday with the knowledge that abortions in this country are declining: 1.21 million a year in 2005, the latest reliable figures available show, compared to 1.36 million some 10 years ago.

But hundreds of thousands of pilgrims will be here to deliver one message: There is a right to life. It is an integral part of the Declaration of Independence so painstakingly penned by our Founding Fathers.

Busloads of those marchers of all stripes will be from my district in Pennsylvania. They will be leaving home at very early hours that morning, and actually the night before to get here to stand for that cause, to stand for life. And they will be joining the gathering of pro-life Americans to march down Constitution until they reach the steps of the Supreme Court.

Abortion has been a part of the health care debate, and may still keep current bills from passing. No taxpayer should be forced to pay for abortions in this country. That policy has been reaffirmed many times by this Congress, and should not be changed for the current circumstances. And I ask my colleagues to join in this march on Friday, and to help celebrate the gift of life.

On December 2, 2009, I joined 39 of my House colleagues in sending Speaker PELOSI a letter regarding a prohibition on the government funding of abortion in the final version of the health care legislation.

□ 1700

A significant majority of Americans, both those that identify themselves as pro-life and pro-choice, are opposed to the government funding of abortions.

The Senate-passed health care bill, H.R. 1362, would require Federal funds to subsidize elective abortion. This plan differs greatly from the House version that maintains the current policy of preventing the Federal funding of abortion and for funding of health care benefit packages that include abortion.

Mr. Speaker, any health care reform proposals that this Chamber agrees to must always place a high value on protecting innocent life. These provisions

should include the language found within the Stupak-Pitts amendment, which passed this Chamber by a wide bipartisan margin of 240-194.

Mr. Speaker, as we take up any health care, let us preserve the Founders' dedication to the principle of life.

DESECRATING DEMOCRACY

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

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I never thought I would live to see the day when a commentator entrusted by a major broadcast network with the ability to reach millions of listeners would use his influence to incite voter fraud, but I'm afraid this week we passed that unfortunate milestone.

On Friday, January 15, MSNBC commentator Ed Schultz told his nationally syndicated radio audience, I tell you what, if I lived in Massachusetts I'd try to vote 10 times. I don't know if they'd let me or not, but I'd try to. Yeah, that's right. I'd cheat to keep these bastards out. I would.

Now, this could be dismissed as an unfortunate verbal excess brought on by the passion of the moment, except for the fact that when given the opportunity to retract the statement, Mr. Schultz embellished it in a way that makes it crystal clear that his words were deliberate and calculated. He said, I misspoke on Friday. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I meant to say, if I could vote 20 times, that's what I'd do.

Later he said, Let me be very clear, I'm not advocating voter fraud, I'm just telling you what I would do. Now, Mr. Speaker, exactly how does one not advocate voter fraud when three times on national broadcasts you say that's what you would do?

Mr. Speaker, this can only be interpreted as an incitement to commit voter fraud in a pivotal election in the course of our Nation. As such, it strikes at the very foundation of democratic traditions and our constitutional institutions. In every election, win, lose or draw, it is of utmost importance that the vote be fair, that it be accurate, and that it have the confidence of every citizen, both those in the majority as well as those in the minority. If we cannot trust the sanctity of the vote, we destroy the legitimacy of that vote—and with it the legitimacy of that government.

All of our governing institutions and all of their acts rest about a single foundation—fair and free elections which guarantee that those who exercise authority under our Constitution do so deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. It is this principle that Mr. Schultz has sought to desecrate and demean. His statements excusing voter fraud weaken the single most important mechanism of

our democracy and undermine our form of government. His words deserve—indeed, they demand—the contempt and condemnation of every American. And they deserve immediate action by those who have accorded him his broadcast platforms and whose silence and inaction thus far can only be described as a disgrace.

HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. AKIN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. AKIN. Good afternoon. Once again, we find ourselves here on the floor of the U.S. Congress and the subject before us, in spite of various events that have been of great interest to people yesterday—I'm thinking of the election of Massachusetts—still remains the question of health care.

There is discussion with the new political realignments that it may be that the House will take up and just pass the bill that was passed by the Senate. That is one possibility, which then of course would require the bill not to have to go back to the Senate.

And so we come back to this question of health care in America, something that has a lot of people's attention. It's not the top priority I think for many people. I think many people are worried about unemployment, they're worried about the economy, they're worried about excessive government spending, they're worried about terrorism and national security. But underneath those, perhaps, there is still some concern about health care, but particularly a fear that in an attempt to try to solve a problem we may make a bad situation worse. Indeed, when government does too much, we have found that we sometimes get some very bad side effects—inferior quality, inefficient allocation of goods, bureaucratic rationing, and of course excessive expenses.

Now, if health care is expensive now, just wait until it's free, some have said. We were promised by our President. Here's what you need to know: First, I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits either now or in the future. Sounds pretty definitive. It sounds like he says, hey, I understand about the deficit, I understand about the debt, I understand about excessive spending, and I am not going to add one dime to our deficit.

Well, the bill that's being proposed does not add a dime, so I guess technically this statement is correct. It adds, rather, either one or several trillion dollars. That may be a whole lot worse than the dime. So this particular statement, along with some others that we've heard, is not really precise in terms of what has been proposed,