

President. But the House bill coming up will block tort reform. As a candidate, the President said that we shouldn't underestimate the amount of money that can be saved in the current health care system. I agree. But these bills will cut Medicare by \$500 billion and eliminate disease management programs and other programs that could save money.

This bill doesn't fix our health care system. It finances it. It is not too late to reform Medicare, reform Medicaid, reform health care, cut the waste and improve quality. Let people buy across State lines. Let them join groups. Make insurance personal, portable and permanent. Millions are asking us to fix health care, but they want us to do it right. Millions of Americans can't all be wrong.

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#### HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I oppose the government takeover of our Nation's health care system. The Democratic legislation, a 1,990-page \$1 trillion bill will raise taxes, it will increase our national debt, and it will put government bureaucrats between patients and their doctors. I agree it's important to reform our health care system, but this is not the way to do it.

I've spent the last 10 months trying to share my perspective as a physician with over 30 years' experience. My constituents and millions of Americans across this country have also spent the last 10 months trying to make their voices heard by the President and the Democratic majority. This legislation that the Democrats want us to vote on suggests that the Speaker just doesn't care what practicing physicians and the American public think.

This legislation is the wrong direction for America, and it's a death knell for quality care for American patients. Mr. Speaker, I reject any government takeover of our Nation's health care system.

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□ 1915

#### HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to a letter from the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau. It concisely sums up many of the problems in the Pelosi health care bill for our small family farms.

According to the letter, "The employer mandate and 8 percent payroll tax will place an enormous burden on a significant portion of agriculture and its related industry. Although some tax incentives are provided in the legislation, farmers are price-takers, not

price-makers. They do not have the option of merely passing along those mandated costs."

The letter continues, "It is concerning that there are no allowances for seasonal workers. Requiring coverage for seasonal workers would have significantly adverse economic effects on many farmers across this country."

And finally, "Our Nation cannot afford the projected costs of H.R. 3962, especially considering the growing deficits and other fiscal calamities with entitlement programs that must be dealt with in the immediate future."

This legislation makes little sense when many farmers around the country are struggling with high feed costs, unsustainable energy prices, and a difficult national economy. I urge my colleagues to reject H.R. 3962.

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#### HEALTH CARE

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Speaker of the House cares about all Americans. She cares about all Americans because we have worked together as a team. It's not the Pelosi bill; it's the bill that responds to America's needs. And I'm proud of our Speaker and this Congress and those who will make the right decision tomorrow.

I imagine if you were here in 1965 when President Johnson had the vision and the wisdom to formulate the strategy for Medicare in collaboration with that Congress, you could hear the sound, echoing sound of the naysayers, "no, no, no." But in none of our town hall meetings did one person stand up and say, "I'll give away our Medicare."

So tomorrow we will give seniors what they know and understand: saving a buck, closing the doughnut hole, providing no pay for preventative coverage, helping low-cost seniors. And one of the things that we will do is those States, like the State of Texas, who don't do their job as it relates to providing for the uninsured, because Texas stands at the number one State of uninsured and Houston is the number one city, we have got to fix it for those people who are in need.

Vote the right way tomorrow.

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#### HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to Speaker PELOSI's 2,032, and growing, page health care bill.

Today we are at the highest unemployment level since 1983. The American people can't afford these massive new spending increases, and I refuse to pass them on to my children and grandchildren.

This legislation will immediately increase taxes on American families and

small businesses by \$729 billion. The total bill will cost over a trillion dollars over the next decade, with money we don't have.

And what do the American people get for all this new spending? A bill that you pay for now but doesn't give coverage for 4 years.

Republicans have real solutions for improving access and affordability for American health care. We support tort reform to eliminate frivolous lawsuits. We support allowing negotiating across State lines and group purchasing power. We support choice of coverage without the government's forcing people into government-run health care.

Oppose the Pelosi health care bill.

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#### HEALTH CARE

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

Ms. FALLIN. Mr. Speaker, if we pass Speaker PELOSI's 1,990-page bill, which creates a massive new Federal bureaucracy to manage our health care system, States will face huge unfunded mandates.

The \$34 billion worth of unfunded mandates to the States in this bill might help hide the true cost of this \$1.3 trillion legislation, but the truth is the States will be picking up a lot of these costs. And the only way States could deal with the increased costs and the unfunded mandates would be to look at raising taxes on small businesses and on individuals, and that is unacceptable.

Speaker PELOSI may be all right with increasing the national debt and spending up to \$1.4 trillion on this legislation, but when the bill comes due, the children of America and their children will be the ones who will be paying a hefty price for reckless spending in this Congress.

It is estimated that this Pelosi health care bill will cost Oklahoma \$127 million a year in unfunded mandates. In our State of Oklahoma, we're required to balance our budget each year.

Let's kill this bill because it will be bad for the States and bad for unfunded State mandates.

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#### THE GOP HEALTH CARE PLAN

(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, while earlier this week the Wall Street Journal called the Pelosi health care plan "the worst bill ever," the Chicago Tribune last week called the GOP plan a good plan and said, "We don't agree with everything in these bills but we do agree with ideas such as these:

"Let insurers sell policies across State lines. That would loosen the strangling State-by-State regulations and unleash competition to drive premium prices down." And, indeed, that

is what happens under the Republican bill.

“Give people who buy insurance in the private market the same tax breaks as those who get it through employers.” That only makes sense.

And, finally, “Expand the ability of small business, trade associations, and other groups to set up insurance pools to offer coverage at more attractive rates.”

These are the advantages of the Republican plan. And to boot, ours cuts the deficit.

#### HEALTH CARE

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, the truth has now come out, and the fact is that you can go to jail if you do not buy into the Speaker Pelosi health care bill.

One of the most onerous provisions of the Pelosi health care bill is the so-called “individual mandate.” This is a provision that will force every single American to buy into their health care plans whether they want to or not.

Back when Bill Clinton was President back in 1994, the CBO said, “A mandate requiring all individuals to purchase insurance like this would be an unprecedented form of Federal action.”

And how does the government force this mandate? If you don't buy their insurance plan, they will fine you 2.5 percent of your entire income. And what happens, you may ask, if you don't pay that fine to them? Now we know the answer: You could be sent to jail, literally. Section 201 of the code says that. That's right. The Joint Committee of Taxation has declared that you will be eligible to be fined up to \$250,000 and/or imprisonment of up to 5 years if you do not comply with this new plan.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bad bill. It will hurt consumers. It will hurt families. It will hurt everyone else. And it may send Americans to jail.

#### HEALTH CARE

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, unemployment has reached 10.2 percent in our great country, and what is the response of this Congress and this administration?

Well, a bill that includes \$730 billion in tax increases on small businesses and on the middle class that will cause millions more of Americans to lose their jobs. And adding insult to injury, Mr. Speaker, the Pelosi bill would actually raise the cost of insurance premiums on American families.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are not stupid. They know what's in this bill. They know what effects this bill will have on themselves, on their

families, and on their country. And that's why the American people have rejected it and are saying “no” to this bill.

Congress needs to do the right thing, the responsible thing, and also say “no” and reject this irresponsible piece of legislation.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCMAHON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

#### NOW IS THE TIME FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM

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

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, after years of aspiration and planning, after too many families bankrupted and too many lives lost, this House stands ready to do something both great and necessary. We will soon join every other civilized nation on this planet in offering each and every citizen decent, affordable health care.

For me, a new Member of this body, it has been an incredible exercise in democracy. I participated in more than 60 town hall meetings, visits with doctors, nurses, patients, and listened as advocates with every conceivable point of view. Almost everyone agrees that we must do something and do something bold.

Too many Americans know the fear that losing a job means losing access to doctors and to lifesaving drugs. Too many Americans have watched as illness or injury has driven their family into bankruptcy. Too many small businesses, nonprofits, and small town mayors have seen their budgets wrecked by exploding costs of health care insurance.

Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago in the city of Bridgeport, I met Marta, who lost her job of 23 years and is currently relying on her COBRA coverage to pay for the management of her diabetes. She is terrified. Her COBRA will end soon, and she has been refused private coverage time and time again.

I've also gotten to know a young man named Eugene who makes his living laying bricks. He can only work during the warm weather construction months when he has good coverage through his union, but in the wintertime when he can't work, he joins Marta in the ranks of the fearful. He prays that nothing happens. He asked me, “Even the phone company has rollover minutes. Why not our insurance plans?”

When this House passes the Affordable Health Care for America Act, no American will ever be denied coverage because they have a preexisting condition. When this bill passes, we will begin to close the Medicare doughnut

hole so that no senior will have to choose between their prescription and buying food. When this bill passes, our small businesses, our nonprofits, and our mayors will no longer watch as exploding health care costs wreck their budgets.

Is the bill perfect? No. But in this of all things, we cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good. There is too much at stake—the lives of those who die because they can't see a doctor, the peace of mind of millions of Americans who know that bankruptcy is one illness away, the moral standing of this great Nation that has fallen too short for too long in keeping its people healthy.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time. Mr. Speaker, “yes” is the answer. I join my colleagues in urging that tomorrow we make history.

□ 1930

#### “NO” TO GOVERNMENT-RUN HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, many years ago during the mid-eighties, I had the opportunity to travel to what is now the former Soviet Union when it was the Soviet Union. I had that experience based upon the fact that I was a judge in Texas and got to go see what it was like to live under that type of regime.

Of course, in those days, everything was controlled. Everything was controlled by the government. The lives of the people were totally controlled by the government because the government, as they say, knew better. It made all decisions for the people. It made the decision what town they lived in, what apartment they lived in, what job they had, where they worked, and gave them permission or not to even travel from town to town. And, of course, government made also the decision and the control over their health care.

I noticed as I went from clinic to clinic that the lines would be down the street. Four in the afternoon, they shut the door. The people disappeared. The next day they would come back and stand in line again, hoping to get some of that government-controlled, rationed health care.

I also noticed something more important than all of that, that the spirit of those Russian people was broken. They had given up. They had given up on themselves and on their government.

Eventually, of course, they were defeated, as we say, when the wall came down. But they were not really defeated by the United States, by the West. They were defeated by their own government because of their oppression and subjugation to the government and government control of their lives. Yes, in those days, the evil empire, as we