

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 to 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.

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“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

called it, was the ultimate example of total government control.

Now, of course, we are not the Soviet Union. I am not saying we are. But today we are engaged in the great debate of at least this century of health care. But it is a bigger issue than health care. The issue is about government control of our lives. Regardless of how you put the bill that is now over 2,000 pages, it changes the philosophy that the government now will control health care in this country, rather than us as citizens.

You know, the idea that government is going to save us all. We are going down that road of government, more government, more government, more government, and more government. You know, government is already the biggest employer in this country. It is the biggest consumer in this country. It is the biggest landowner in this country. It is the biggest spender in this country. It has most of the money. And when it runs out of money, it takes money from the people when they are alive and even when they are dead because of the death tax.

Just a few months ago, the government took control over the financial industry, the mortgage industry, the banking industry, and the automobile industry, just to name a few. But I don't believe the people in this country are broken, and they are not defeated. They showed it when they came to Washington, D.C., this week. They are concerned about government. It is a bigger issue than health care. They are concerned about government running roughshod over their lives. They exercised, even with all of the critics and cynics, they exercised their right to peacefully assemble and petition government for redress of grievances. It is in the First Amendment. It is first because the First Amendment is the most important.

But people are fearful of government, of government control over their lives. This health care bill is just one example of us moving down that road of government is going to take care of us all; it is going to save us all.

Mr. Speaker, this country has never been great and will never be great because we have government programs. Government programs have not made this country what it is today. Individuals have made it. But, also, the individuals that had the right and have the right of liberty, to make decisions on their own rather than government taking care of them all. We are great because of the people here and who have not been defeated by the government of the United States.

So I hope we in this House would turn against the temptation of turning everything over to government. This is one place where we can put the brakes on and say no to government running the health of this Nation. Because government doesn't do it better. You know, this government-run health care plan has the confidence of FEMA, the efficiency of the Post Office, and the

compassion of the IRS, and we should start over and fix the problems that we have rather than expecting government to take care of us all.

And that's just the way it is.

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

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

FIXING HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, the Democratic health care bill fixes a number of long-standing problems with health insurance and health care in America. The health insurance industry is exempt from antitrust law in the United States. That means they can and they do get together and collude. They collude to drive up your premiums, they collude to curtail your coverage, they divide up the world and determine where each of them might or might not sell policies so there isn't competition in any way. That is all legal. They are exempt.

The Democratic bill with my amendment repeals that privilege for this industry. They will have to play under the same rules as every other business in America. That will lower premiums between 10 and 25 percent, according to the Consumer Union. That is one step. That is in the Democratic bill. The Republicans wouldn't touch that with a hundred-foot pole. The insurance industry is so generous at campaign time, they want to actually give new loopholes to the industry, which I will get to in a moment.

The Democratic bill outlaws denying you coverage because you were once sick, preexisting condition. The Democratic plan denies canceling your policy when you have been paying your premiums for years because you got sick. That is called rescission by the industry. No more. No lifetime caps which are hidden in the small print. People find out about them when they get a serious illness. Outlawed by the Democratic bill.

And, also, the Democratic bill will put annual caps on people's spending. No one will ever again lose their house in America because they lost their job and their health insurance and they got sick. Yes, the hospital still has to take them, but they will take your house. That won't happen if the Democratic bill is adopted. The Republicans will deal with none of those abuses, in their obeisance to the Republicans, their patrons in the insurance industry.

We are going to begin to fill in the doughnut hole which they created. We are going to help small businesses buy

plans with health credits. It is a good start. It is not perfect. It can be improved as we go through the process. But it is a good start at reining in the costs of an out-of-control health care system.

Now the Republicans' alternative, as I said, they continue the anti-trust exemption and the price fixing by the insurance industry. They allow them to continue to deny you coverage because you were once sick. They allow the insurance industry to do rescissions and cancel your policy when you got sick, even though you have been paying your premiums. And, of course, individual coverage will not be limited, so they will still have bankruptcies and people losing their houses.

But wait. It gets better. They have something called the new national plan. That is the key to what they are doing here. You can buy a national policy, and it will be cheaper. And, oh, wait a minute. Here is the small print, page 122 of the Republican bill: Your national policy will only be subject to the rules in the State in which it is written. Not where you live. If you have a problem, you will have to file with the insurance commissioner in the State where it is written. That is probably not too good because we have some States that basically don't regulate the industry at all.

But it gets better. The Republicans are so creative. They have created a 51st State called the Northern Mariana Islands because of the convicted Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff and the scandals around him, the sweat shops, the sex scandals, all that stuff. That is where your new national plan will be based, is the Northern Mariana Islands.

So if you buy a policy in my home State of Oregon and you want to file a complaint, you will be calling the insurance commissioner in the Northern Mariana Islands. And perhaps, when he gets out of jail, that might even be Jack Abramoff. What a great deal. It would be a joke if they weren't serious about it. This is something that the industry wanted. They wanted a new loophole to better abuse consumers, and the Republicans want to deliver it to them. They can't be serious.

So I would say to my colleagues, you can throw in with the insurance industry which they seem to think is totally benign and always there for the American people. Or you can throw in on the side of consumer protection, lower costs, and health care for all Americans. That's the choice tomorrow.

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

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