

to create a new option for Americans to sign on to a government health care plan. Proponents claim that this will offer a choice between their current health insurance and the government plan. That is what proponents say. What they do not say is that under many of the major pieces of legislation under consideration, the government health care plan is funded by ending the tax break employers receive for providing health care insurance. This tax break supports health insurance plans for most families, 165 million Americans. Do they know that the legislation being considered will trigger a tax decision by their employer to cancel health insurance for their family, leaving them actually no choice but an untested, brand new, government-only HMO attempting to care for their family?

The new legislation also depends on funding from a climate change bill that press reports indicate a number of majority Members will not support. Without funding from a climate change bill, there is little revenue except borrowing or printing more money to support new government health care.

Seniors and low-income Americans depend on the promises we make. The worst thing we can do is make commitments that are too expensive and pull the rug out from those who can least afford to cope. We should back reforms that the government can afford to keep. And we will be putting forward new legislation on that in the coming days.

There are a number of steps that Congress should take to bring down the cost of medicine.

First, we should expand the number of Americans with access to employer-provided health care. One of the best ways to do this is by allowing small businesses to band together to form larger pools of insurable employees.

Second, the Congress should expand access to care for millions of self-employed Americans without insurance. A refundable tax credit for individuals equal in value to the same tax breaks large employers get would help them to buy insurance.

Third, as jobs become more portable, so should health insurance. We should protect Americans who lose their jobs and families excluded from coverage by pre-existing conditions. Congress can remove the current 18-month time limit on COBRA continuing coverage, giving family members the option of always sticking with the insurance plan they currently have.

Fourth, we must pass common-sense measures to bring down health care costs. The VA already uses fully electronic medical records to care for 20 million patients while saving lives and cutting wasteful spending. We also need lawsuit reform. We need federal lawsuit reforms to lower malpractice insurance premiums and retain doctors in high-risk professions.

In sum, I working with Congressman CHARLES DENT, my co-chair of the Moderate Tuesday Group of 32 moderates on a health care bill. We will have a detailed plan by the May recess that makes, insurance less expen-

sive . . . and therefore covering more Americans without burdening our treasury with new borrowing needed from China or any other country.

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.)

GLOBAL WARMING

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, it is great to have this opportunity to come down to the floor once again to get the floor and the country ready for the debate on global warming. And I just want to put a couple of things in perspective. What the whole global warming bill intends to do is to monetize, which means put a cost, for carbon emissions. Now everyone knows that when you add a cost, it will be passed on, so hence the debate that we have been dealing with in the committee over the last couple weeks about raising energy costs. And it has mostly been on the premise of monetizing carbon, either by putting on a carbon tax, or monetizing carbon through what is called a cap-and-trade regime where you have marketeers purchase carbon credits. That is only one aspect of the rise of energy costs, because we do know that the producers will pass that on to the end users. And who are the end users? That is us. That is individual consumers, that is manufacturing, that is the service sector and that is the government. It will be passed back on to us in higher costs for us.

There are other additional costs involved in this whole program, in this whole plan. And the other aspect of costs is the energy it will take for utilities to capture carbon dioxide. At a power plant that is being built that I just visited, 40 percent of the electricity that it was going to sell on the open market would now go internally to try to capture the carbon. So if they were going to sell 1600 megawatts of power, now they are only going to be able to sell about 950 megawatts of power because they are going to have to internally use that.

Now if they have done the investment, doing a cost-benefit analysis and return on that, not only will they have less power to sell on the market if the demand is the same, the supply is less and the cost will go up. But they will also have to have a second cost increase, which will be buying the carbon credits. Now those are two areas by which electricity costs will increase.

Well there is another area where electricity costs will increase because we are going to push an efficiency

standard on utilities, which is another aspect that they are going to have to make major capital investments. So we have three times a burden on utilities, which they will pass on to the consumer.

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Now, the concern many of us have, if we want to maintain our jobs and we want to maintain our competitive force in the world economy, we have to have low-cost power. The other thing that is really hard to understand is why would we unilaterally raise the cost to produce goods and services when the major emitters of the world today will not be forced to comply.

Here is a chart of the important transmissions and emitting countries. It would surprise a lot of people to notice here at the bottom is the United States. We have had very little growth in emissions. Where has all of the growth come: Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Southeast Asia, India, China, Korea, Eastern Europe. This is the increase in the emissions.

So as we come to this debate if we just want to be straightforward, we are going to say if we are going to enforce all this pain on the U.S. economy at a time when this economy really can't accept the pain because of the job losses, shouldn't we have some gain? The reality is we could stop our carbon emissions today and put it to zero. And what will happen to worldwide carbon emissions? They will go up. We could go to zero. They would go up. That is no way to address a problem.

We have declining carbon emissions in our economy today, and the reason why we have it is because of the recession we are facing. So job loss, manufacturing loss creates lower emissions which is what my friends on the other side of the aisle would like to see. We are going to fight to defeat it.

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.)

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.)

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR 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 Maine (Ms. PINGREE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. PINGREE of Maine 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 California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

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

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am here to tonight to claim the time on behalf of the Progressive Caucus. The Progressive Caucus come to the floor every week to talk about a progressive vision for America, to discuss what America is and could be, to embrace the idea that everyone does better when everyone does better, to embrace the idea that we should look at the world with courage, not with fear, that we believe in dialogue, we believe in discussion. We believe in people doing well, and we believe in radical abundance, not fear of scarcity, a progressive vision; yes, even a liberal vision of an America which is doing well because everybody is working. We are promoting broad-based economic policies that allow for a higher quality of life for all Americans.

Yes, the Progressive Caucus comes to the floor every week to talk to the American people and with our colleagues about these critical issues.

Tonight we have a great topic, but before I announce tonight's topic, I just want to say we are very, very happy and pleased to be joined by a dynamic advocate for the cause of human justice, none other than Congresswoman GWEN MOORE of the great State of Wisconsin.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Thank you, Mr. ELLISON.

I would start out by acknowledging all of the tremendous work that the 9 to 5 Organization, founded in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has done around the issue of the importance of providing sick pay to workers.

People may not realize it, but workers nationwide have no sick pay. That is particularly relevant right now when you consider the beginning of this global pandemic, the swine flu. We had school closings all across the country.

Parents were forced to take off work to take care of their children because of the quarantine conditions that were ordered by health departments. Not only did they do it because they were responding to a potential health crisis, but families living on a budget now have to deal with the decreased wages they are experiencing.

And, of course, when children become ill, parents can't afford to miss work so they go to work anyway and infect other people at work. They send their kids to day-care and infect other children. And, of course, employers suffer, many of them who are small businesses because they find that there is a loss of productivity.

One of the greatest losses of productivity for an employer are employees who are sick. And they become sick because other workers are unwilling to lose a day's pay because of a little cold that turns out to be either the swine flu or maybe even worse, the regular flu that is quite deadly and quite contagious.

This drives up medical costs, and God forbid that a spouse or a child falls gravely ill or is seriously injured because that worker then has no choice but to immediately seek medical help and take the loved ones to a doctor or hospital, and more absenteeism occurs and they maybe end up losing their jobs because small businesses cannot really afford to have their businesses shuttered while people are ill.

In my district, 51 percent of the African American male population is jobless, and it is the largest racial disparity in unemployment and poverty in the country. Forty-three percent of the city's workers earn less than \$20,000 a year, and many are among the 122,230 Milwaukeeans, which make up 47 percent of the private workforce, who do not have sick days.

Last year in my district, the city of Milwaukee approved a binding referendum on the 2008 ballot that called for private employers in the city to provide paid sick leave for all workers, and this was due in part to the diligent effort of the unions and the community groups led by the National Association of Working Women, 9 to 5. And so now, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is one of only three cities in the country to require private employers to provide paid sick days.

It is smart economically because the lack of paid sick days is hurting Milwaukee's economic development.

Mr. ELLISON. Congresswoman MOORE, is that why it might be a good idea to support the Healthy Families Act, which is H.R. 1542, which is critical to guarantee workers up to 7 paid sick days a year?

I yield to the gentlelady.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Thank you for yielding.

This is a very important piece of legislation offered by the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO). I am so proud to be an original cosponsor. This makes so much sense.

Let me tell you what happens. The reality is when people don't have paid sick time, they cheat. They lie. When they are really sick, they don't come to work anyway. And worse, they neglect basic health care needs. They don't get their kids vaccinated. They don't take care of their teeth. They don't catch diseases and get basic health care like mammograms. They don't get them and catch these diseases early when they don't have built-in sick days. There is no employer on this planet that would wittingly deny someone basic health care knowing that an early detection of cancer would have saved their lives but for the fact that they didn't have paid sick days.

Mr. ELLISON. I quite agree with the gentlelady from Wisconsin who pointed out that the Healthy Families Act is a great piece of legislation, something that is progressive, something that makes sense for America, much like legislation of the past which supported workers' rights. What this piece of legislation would do for Americans, it would allow Americans to recover from short-term illness, it would allow Americans to care for a sick family member, it would allow Americans to seek routine medical care, or to seek assistance related to domestic violence.

Some people might think, "Oh, my God, that's going to cost us a lot of money." If people are that sick or in serious dire straits, they're taking the time off anyway. You're not planning for it, it's not in the schedule and there's no accommodation. If somebody can come in and say, look, straight up, I've got to take the day off because I'm sick and I have 7 days I can take, then what happens is you have greater productivity because workers are taking the time off they need to get well; workers are taking their kids to get the immunizations they need; workers are now actually engaging in preventive health care which means that they are not going to have to take extended periods of time off and thereby cut productivity.

By expending the money that it would take to provide the 7 sick days that are called for under the Healthy Families Act, businesses would save money. Businesses would be better off because we would have greater productivity and a healthier workforce over time. It's what my mother would call being penny wise and pound foolish to deny this legislation. But it would also be what my mother would call an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure if we were to have a great piece of legislation like the Healthy Families Act.

As you pointed out, as fear of the missed and inaccurately called swine flu is going around, and it should be called the H1N1 virus—not as catchy but it's more accurate—the fact is that such legislation at this time, so people could get the flu shots and checkups that they need, in times like this would be a great idea.