

This is something that we can achieve a positive solution on if the administration will open that door to dialogue rather than distrust. Let's work for the American people rather than for bigger government.

NO SPECIAL EXEMPTION FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS UNDER OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. ROSS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, you know the only thing worse right now than having the implementation of this health care law known as ObamaCare on October 1 would be the implementation of this law with special consideration to Members of Congress. And some may say that's not going to happen because Members of Congress are subjected to and not exempted from ObamaCare; and the short answer to that is yes, but the real answer is no. And the real answer is no because there is a state of confusion over whether we, as Members of Congress and certain staff members, can continue to receive a 72 percent contribution to our health care benefits.

Now to understand this, let's go back to how this even became an issue. Senator GRASSLEY, at the time that the ObamaCare bill was being debated, wanted to make sure that Members of Congress and their staff were subjected to the pains and the ills and everything else of ObamaCare. He offered an amendment that said:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, Members of Congress and congressional employees would be required to use their employer contribution to purchase coverage through a State-based exchange rather than using the traditional Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan.

That was offered. What became law is different. The language that became law specifically says that Members of Congress and congressional staff with respect to their service as a Member of Congress or congressional staff shall be health plans that are either created under this act or the exchanges. Then it went on to further say that staff is just considered those who are employed by the Members of Congress. It doesn't include staff of committee and staff of leadership.

Now why all the confusion? I don't know, but I know for a fact that when the Office of Personnel Management came out with their letter on August 7 and said, without any basis—any basis in law or fact—and said, you know what, we're going to let Congress continue to have their 72 percent contribution even though the law was clear when it was passed that we are not going to receive anything other than the subsidies allowed under the law, and those subsidies only are available to those who make 400 percent of poverty level or less.

□ 1115

And so we're here on the eve of watching a health care plan go into

place when the American public has given us—and probably deservedly so—an approval rating in single digits, and say, There they go again. Congress has found a special provision for themselves so they will not feel the pain and the economic harm caused by this health care bill.

Mr. Speaker, we can correct this. We can stand up as a collegial body, Republican and Democrat, and say we believe we need to be subjected to the law 100 percent and we think OPM is wrong. And if we want the American public to have what they desperately need to have in this Congress, which is the credibility of this Congress, we need to pass my amendment to the continuing resolution being offered today that says that this OPM letter was wrong and that all Members of Congress, all staff, the President, the Vice President, and all political employees will be subjected to the laws of ObamaCare and not receive this contribution. My friends back home will not receive this contribution. We shouldn't carve out a specialty to ourselves.

Further, what is worse is that if we don't make some change to this law, people will say there will be a brain drain. I see more of a litigation train starting—a litigation train because we've already put in the law a special class of employees. My employees are now subject to the laws of ObamaCare, but the leadership and their employees aren't. I see litigation ensuing on employment discrimination cases that are absolutely unnecessary and could be avoided if we have the foresight, if we have the ability to say, America, we're going to correct this; we're going to make sure that we are subject to all the laws, 100 percent, the same way we ask you to be.

Therefore, Members, I ask, I implore you to please consider this amendment, consider doing what is right, not only under the law but in the eyes of our constituency.

FRAUD AND ABUSE IN OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, in just 3 days, the ObamaCare exchanges are set to go live, and the security of millions of Americans' most sensitive personal information remains at risk.

For the purposes of enrolling people in the exchanges, the administration is building the largest network of Americans' personal information ever created, called the Federal Services Data Hub. This data hub will have the names, birth dates, Social Security numbers, taxpayer status, gender, email addresses, and telephone numbers of millions of Americans expected to apply for coverage in the exchanges. This poses an alarming and obvious risk for identity theft and cybersecurity attacks.

To date, there has been no independent certification that the information will be kept safe. We are simply supposed to rely on this administration's word that reliable security systems will be in place come October 1. This is the same administration that has already failed to meet half of their self-imposed deadlines for the implementation of this disastrous law.

Their word is simply not good enough, and this is why 13 States' attorneys general have sent a letter to HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius expressing their concerns over whether there are adequate safety measures to protect their constituents' personal data.

Making this situation even worse are the ObamaCare "navigators" that are tasked with assessing this information to help people enroll. These navigators are not required by the Federal Government to have background checks or to even have a high school diploma. And yet they will be tasked with handling Americans' most sensitive personal information, such as medical records and even tax returns. In fact, earlier this month, a navigator applicant in Minnesota recently received 2,400 Social Security numbers by mistake. This raises serious concerns about the lack of safeguards in place to protect our personal information.

Mr. Speaker, we know that ObamaCare is simply not ready for prime time. We cannot allow Americans' most personal information to be exposed to these threats. It is completely irresponsible for this President to be encouraging people to sign up when these threats exist.

The President has already delayed portions of this law to help Big Business and insurance companies. It is time for him to work with this Congress to stop this train wreck and to shield the American public from widespread fraud and abuse.

HOW WILL OBAMACARE AFFECT YOU?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I posted on my Facebook page the question, How has ObamaCare affected you or will it affect you in the future? I received almost 400 responses. I will just read a few of those. I certainly won't read the ones that were volatile, Mr. Speaker, because a lot of people are just mad.

It is true that about 20 percent of those responses like ObamaCare and about 80 percent, not so much.

Leisa says:

My son was lowered to 29 hours last week for a new full-time norm because owner doesn't want to pay ObamaCare.

Sharon says this:

My mother is diabetic and couldn't take insulin for 3 days because she couldn't get her test strip prescription filled due to a Medicare glitch because of ObamaCare.

Kristy:

My hardworking husband can only find temporary contract work. No one wants to hire permanent positions, and those that do have permanent positions are hard to even get an interview with. I hope it doesn't last long. We have a baby due in mid-October, and already have three children.

Joseph:

I expect my employer will not be able to afford future raises due to the enormous expense he has to pay under ObamaCare.

Victoria:

My husband has not been able to get a job because folks are not hiring due to ObamaCare. They are actually laying people off. My parents are elderly and they have three doctors who have quit medicine because of ObamaCare. So no, Mr. Poe, it is not the greatest thing ever.

April says this:

Since the implementation of ObamaCare, I have not been able to find a job. No one wants to hire a permanent position. Everything is part-time or temporary for all those jobs, and they also tell me that I'm overqualified. I think the whole ObamaCare thing needs to be done away with.

Genelle says:

My husband and I are in our seventies. Our copays for prescriptions have doubled. Our doctor told us that he will not be able to treat us with the same quality we now get when ObamaCare goes into full steam.

Mary Lou probably said it the best. She said:

Ted, we pray even more fervently that we just don't get sick.

Those are some responses of people out there who actually work for a living and are concerned about health care. They're not so sold on this.

So here we are, on this Saturday afternoon, and the President is spending time negotiating with the Iranians about things in Iran. He's spending time negotiating with the Russians about things that are going on in Syria. But he won't negotiate with Congress. I don't get that.

Why doesn't he come over here to the House? Let's sit down on an informal basis and just chat about the problems we have. Is it the idea that the people of Syria and Russia and Iran are more important to talk with than Members of Congress? I don't get it.

Like Mary Lou said, "ObamaCare: we just don't want to get sick."

And now, today, we're facing a debt ceiling problem, we're facing a continuing to fund the Federal Government problem, we have ObamaCare that gives special treatment for about 1,200 groups that got waivers. None of these people I mentioned got waivers. Let's talk about those things. Let's find out. And maybe we can work out something. But let's at least talk.

So, Mr. Speaker, you're in good with the President. Give him a phone call. Ask him to come over here and chat this afternoon with the House—the Democrats, the Republicans—and let's work something out about the continuing resolution, about the debt ceiling, but at least let's talk and negotiate and not refuse to talk to even Members of the House of Representatives.

And that's just the way it is.

AT A CROSSROADS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) for 2½ minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, it's Saturday morning and we're here in the House of Representatives in an unusual session. I'm glad some people had the opportunity to go home last night and come back this morning.

Some people say, Oh, this is unusual duty, you're working hard, and all of that. And I say to them that I represent the millions of people across the United States who are going to work, sometimes at midnight, work all night, and get up in the morning and go to work at 6 o'clock. They're struggling to put food on the table. They're struggling to educate their children. They're struggling to pay their mortgage and keep their home and their family together.

So I believe that it's Congress' responsibility, and there's no question about it that we work—we work on Saturday, we work on Sunday, we work on Monday, and we'll work until we get this situation resolved.

Now where are we? We're at a crossroads. Rarely, in the history of our Nation, have we come to a crossroads like this. We have the biggest government program probably since World War II in ObamaCare and the President's health care plan going into effect in a few days. We have the government running out of money in a few days, on October 1. And then we have the country facing a financial deficit in less than 2 weeks.

So this is an important crossroads. We need to get it right because there are a lot of hardworking Americans counting on us.

We must avoid the biggest government takeover of health care or any segment of our economy in history. We must avoid forcing people into part-time employment and the government making decisions about our health care. Even the unions are walking away from this plan now. We have a short time to accomplish that.

The deficit is \$17 trillion, and they want to extend it almost another trillion—\$900 billion—for 1 year. Since the beginning of the Obama administration, in 5 years, we've gone from \$9 trillion to \$17 trillion in debt—almost doubling it.

Finally, funding the government. We must keep the government open. We must be responsible stewards for the public. But the spending spree in Washington has to stop. Republicans have held the line. We need to hold the line responsibly. We can cut waste, we can cut inefficiencies, and we can make government accountable to the people.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 28 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COLLINS of Georgia) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Dear Lord, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We come to You as a Nation in the midst of great uncertainty and worry. As people look for causes and solutions, the temptation is great to seek ideological position.

We ask that You might send Your Spirit of peace and reconciliation, that instead of ascendancy over opponents, the Members of this people's House and all elected to represent our Nation might work together humbly, recognizing the best in each other's hopes to bring to resolution the current impasse over the economy.

Give Your Spirit of consolation to those who are concerned about the stability of their income, especially those who serve in our Armed Forces. May their welfare inspire those engaged in this debate to find fair and lasting solutions.

May all that is done be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. BEATTY led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

EPA REGULATIONS DRIVE UP ENERGY COSTS

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