

THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM

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

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to highlight the economic need for health care reform. Indeed, as my friend from North Carolina just indicated, there are a lot of misleading statistics on health care. In fact, we just heard a few from her.

We have heard a great deal about the human costs of failing to reform health care. Forty-six million Americans lack health care insurance. A child without insurance, for example, is 5 times more likely to die of appendicitis than a child that has access to health care insurance.

The loss of any life is truly incalculable. However, there are those who would rather avoid talking about that child. They prefer to discuss the dollars and cents of health care. For those who worry only about the cost of reform, I would like to discuss the tremendous economic cost of doing nothing.

We know the cost of doing nothing. Without reform, small businesses will pay \$2.4 trillion in health care for their employees over the next decade. Reforming the system and controlling costs could save those small businesses \$800 billion by 2018 and save 168,000 jobs, unless we do nothing.

Currently, 46 million Americans lack health insurance. We know the economic costs of that. In 2008, Federal, State and local governments paid \$442.9 billion to reimburse the uncompensated costs for visits to health clinics and hospitals by the uninsured. That places a tax burden on every American of \$627 a year, Madam Speaker. If we continue doing nothing, the tax burden in inflation-adjusted dollars will nearly triple by 2030.

As health insurance costs continue to rise, and they will, and as more Americans find themselves unable to afford insurance, and they will, those reimbursement costs will, of course, skyrocket. We know the cost of doing nothing, and we cannot afford that cost.

Americans have the most expensive health care system in the world. True, the quality of care at the highest levels is second to none. However, the dramatically rising costs each year render more and more people unable to access that quality care.

As chairman of Fairfax County, Virginia, Board of Supervisors, one the primary concerns I heard from county retirees was the rapidly rising cost of health care. Senior citizens and those on fixed incomes were especially concerned that the ever-growing premiums were forcing them to choose between health care and other necessities. Private industry is also feeling that pinch. Companies such as IBM have begun to eliminate retiree health care benefits altogether, precisely because of rising health care costs.

In 1960, health care costs in the United States were 5 percent of our

Gross Domestic Product. Today, they represent 18 percent, and if we do nothing, the costs will rise to a staggering 34 percent of our entire GDP by 2040. Madam Speaker, our children will be paying seven times more for health care costs than we paid in 1960. That level of cost increase is unconscionable and unsustainable.

Workers currently receiving employer-provided health insurance are increasingly faced with two devastating scenarios; either the level of care they receive is reduced to counter the costs, or their health care costs rise each year, far outpacing their rise in wages. For many workers, they see both in a double whammy of paying more for less. This is evident in the growth in the average employer-sponsored health insurance family deductible. In just 7 years year, Madam Speaker, from 1999 to 2006, the average deductible grew 50 percent. For firms with less than 50 employees, the deductible increased from roughly \$1,300 in 1999 to over \$2,000 in 2006.

Currently 43 percent of those smaller firms offer their employees health care coverage. As costs continue to rise, this number will shrink and more Americans will find themselves uninsured and unable to afford affordable options. If we can continue to do nothing, government spending on health care will suffer equally. Spending on Medicare and Medicaid, currently 6 percent of GDP, will rise if we do nothing to 15 percent by 2040.

Studies have shown that slowing the cost growth in health care by 1.5 percentage points a year will result in dramatic decreases in the Federal budget deficit. By 2030, Federal deficits would be 3 percent of GDP smaller than it otherwise would have been, saving us hundreds of billions of dollars a year, something my friend from North Carolina just indicated she was concerned about. If we do nothing, we condemn our future to rapidly increasing budget deficits and a dearth of funding available for other essential government functions.

Madam Speaker, I support comprehensive health care reform.

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 10 o'clock and 41 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

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

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

Lord, the summer solstice has already passed. So quietly and relentlessly daylight grows shorter. The full expression of family joy on a weekend holiday or a brief summer vacation is abruptly ended with the news of a Metro train crash. The bright light is suddenly dimmed when the cloud of fragile life passes by.

Lord, we lift up in prayer all those who died or were injured in yesterday's tragedy here in Northeast Washington. Be with their families, neighbors and friends.

As You restore confidence and peace to the fragile systems of routine in our workaday world, Lord, we bless You and praise You for all of the good days and the good times we try to hold onto as best we can, because they carry us through the times that are not so good.

Lord of the ages, it is You who hold all together and oversee the seasons of everyone's life, even as summer days grow shorter. Both now and forever. 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 gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. POE of Texas 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.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 1777. An act to make technical corrections to the Higher Education Act of 1965, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2967 STOPS LOOPHOLE ABUSE

(Mrs. KIRKPATRICK of Arizona asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2967, a bill I introduced to save 324 jobs in my district and save American taxpayers billions of dollars.

Kraft paper companies have abused a loophole in the alternative fuels mixture tax credit to claim billions of dollars of subsidies with no benefit to the taxpayer. Their gimmicks have not encouraged alternative fuel use, and they