

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RESTORING AMERICANS' HEALTHCARE FREEDOM RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2015—VETO MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM COLE

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my profound disappointment in President Obama's recent decision to veto H.R. 3762, the Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015. It is important to be clear and stand with my constituents in voting to override the President's veto of legislation that is a story of broken promises by President Obama and the Democrats who voted in favor of this legislation.

I want to spend a few minutes describing just a few of the promises made during consideration of Obamacare which have sadly failed to come to fruition. First, Mr. Speaker, President Obama repeatedly told the American people that "if you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep it". Sadly, in reality, it couldn't be further from the truth. More than 4.7 million people received cancellation notices in the fall of 2013, right before Obamacare went into effect. Politifact, no friend to conservatives, even went as far as labeling the President's promise the "Lie of the Year."

Secondly, while Obamacare promised lower healthcare costs and lower premiums, this couldn't be further from the truth. First, on lower healthcare costs, according to CMS' own actuaries, overall spending on healthcare is expected to rise by \$621 billion over 10 years due to the law, at an average of 5.8% per year. That's more than double our projected GDP growth, and a higher rate than before Obamacare. The story on premiums is no better. While President Obama promised lower premiums, as John Adams stated, "facts are stubborn things". The facts are that the average premium for a family plan has increased by \$18,610 from 2009–2013, and the overall cost of premium increases have been over \$1.2 trillion.

Third, Mr. Speaker, Obamacare promised more choice, more competition, and lower costs. Well, unfortunately, that is just not the case in Oklahoma, like many other states across the country. In fact, fewer insurers offer fewer options at higher prices than when Obamacare was passed, over my objections. Obamacare is not the answer and the American people know that.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to co-sponsor the American Health Care Reform Act of 2015 (AHCA), which I support as an alternative to a government-managed health care law. This legislation would provide a number of market-driven solutions to ensure everyone seeking coverage will be able to obtain it. First, it expands federal support for state high

risk pools. Unlike Obamacare, which created an already oversubscribed Federal high risk pool, AHCA returns those concerns to the states, provides the necessary funding to sustain them, and caps the premiums in those plans. Additionally, AHCA tax incentives to equalize the treatment of employer-sponsored coverage and those purchased in the private market. In addition to ensuring healthy competition across the market place, it also ensures that if one loses their job, they do not necessarily have to lose their health insurance. Third, AHCA would provide real competition among insurers, by allowing Americans to purchase health insurance products across state lines and by permitting small businesses to pool together to negotiate better rates. AHCA is the type of legislation needed to replace a bloated, government-run healthcare system which has left a trail of broken promises in its wake.

I am pleased to vote to override the President's veto of H.R. 3762. While I know this vote will not be successful, I am pleased that the President has finally had to confront the issues that the American people have with his signature piece of legislation, the so-called Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Unfortunately, Obamacare is none of these things. I urge all my colleagues to vote in favor of overriding the President's veto.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS: THE FLINT, MICHIGAN, WATER CRISIS

SPEECH OF

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 3, 2016

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank Congressman DAN KILDEE for his tireless work to bring justice for the residents of Flint. His work, and the work of Congressman JOHN CONYERS, Congresswoman BRENDA LAWRENCE, Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL, and so many Members of the Michigan Delegation, is essential to providing the families of Flint a voice as we address this crisis.

Madam Speaker, the situation in Flint is nothing short of a tragedy—and a tragedy that could have been prevented.

Every day, we learn more information about how Michigan public officials sacrificed the health and futures of Flint residents in order to save a few dollars in water costs.

This is a shame and a disgrace. The people of Flint deserve better from their leaders.

As Members of Congress, we cannot stand silent while Americans are poisoned.

First, to truly understand this crisis—you have to understand Flint.

Flint is a majority African American city and the average household income is just \$24,834 a year—that's barely HALF the average household income for the state. Let me say that again, the average household in Flint

earns JUST half of what other Michigan households earn.

Even before the water switched from Detroit to the Flint River, Flint had fallen on hard times.

It was a city in need and instead of taking action, Governor Rick Snyder balanced the budget at the expense of Flint children, their health and their safety.

Even after residents complained of brown water coming out of the taps, the state insisted nothing was wrong.

But not everyone got the same treatment.

Last January—a full year ago—state workers complained about the quality of water. While Flint residents were told the water was perfectly safe, the state employees were provided with bottled water.

Even before that, in October 2014, the Flint General Motors factory complained that the water was corroding car parts. The city helped General Motors tap into a different, safer water line.

While officials lined up to protect state employees and corporate profits, the residents of Flint were fed lies and lead.

Madam Speaker—I have to ask:

Would this have happened in another city, where the residents had the advantage of wealth?

Or do these gross breaches of public trust only happen in cities where politicians see the residents as expendable?

Sadly, I think we all know the answer to that question.

Tragically, this isn't the first time a poor town has been poisoned—and then ignored.

In far too many low-income communities and communities of color across the country, this story is very familiar.

They, like the families in Flint, have had their health, their well-being and their futures traded in by callous politicians more concerned with expanding corporate profits than serving the public good.

It's past time for Congress to take steps to address environmental racism and ensure that everyone—no matter their zipcode—has the opportunity to grow up safe and healthy.

President Obama took the first step by declaring a state of emergency and extending \$80 million in federal funding.

But more can and must be done to address this public health crisis and ensure that this never happens again—in any community, anywhere.

When I was in the California legislature, I worked to pass one of the first state bills regulating lead. This toxin was disproportionately impacting communities of color. I have seen firsthand the devastating impact of lead on children.

I support the work of my colleagues who are demanding state and local officials are held accountable for this man-made disaster, a disaster that never should have happened.

The tragedy in Flint reveals the real impacts of structural and institutional racism and classism on our community. I stand with the people of Flint in my outrage and will continue to demand answers.

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