

Floor Statement of U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Finance
Final Vote on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
Wednesday, December 23, 2009

There is widespread agreement that the health care system in this country has serious problems. Costs are rising at three times the rate of inflation. Many Americans are uninsured. Millions more fear losing their insurance in a weak economy or because of pre-existing conditions. Doctors are ready to close their doors over high malpractice costs and low government reimbursement rates. Something has to be done. Everyone agrees on that much.

But tomorrow, the Senate will vote on a bill that makes a bad situation worse. It's unfortunate that we are voting on a bill that a significant majority – 61 percent – of Americans oppose. The American people, providers and advocacy groups are simply reacting to the fact that this bill slid rapidly down the slippery slope to more and more government control of health care. It contains the biggest expansion of Medicaid since it was created in 1965. It creates a long-term care insurance program called the CLASS Act that the CMS Actuary says runs a significant risk of being unsustainable. It imposes an unprecedented federal mandate for coverage backed by the enforcement authority of the Internal Revenue Service. It increases the size of the government by two and half trillion dollars when fully implemented. It creates dozens of new federal bureaucracies and programs to increase the scope of the federal role in health care.

That's a lot of power over people's lives concentrated in the federal government. And the excesses of this bill appear willfully ignorant of what's going on in the rest of the economy outside of health care. These excesses make this bill far worse than doing nothing. At this point in our nation's history, we are a nation facing very challenging economic times. We have seen the auto industry go into bankruptcy. We have seen banks shutter their doors. The federal debt has increased by \$1.4 trillion since Inauguration. Just the amount of increased debt added just since the inauguration is \$11,535 per household. It now exceeds \$12 trillion for the first time in history.

At the beginning of this debate, one of the key promises of health care reform was that it would bring down federal health costs. This needs to be done before health spending sinks the federal budget and saddles taxpayer. This bill bends the federal spending curve further upward by \$160 billion over the next decade.

Americans have rightly lost faith when in the face of the current economic crisis, Congress thinks this \$2.5 trillion restructuring of the health care system is a good idea. From rationing care to infringing on the doctor-patient relationship, this government-run system will guarantee U.S. taxpayers a staggering tax burden for generations to come. When the debate began last year, interested legislators of both parties set forth benchmarks that were no-brainers: Health care reform should lower the cost of premiums. It should reduce the deficit. It should bend the growth curve in health care the right way. The Reid bill doesn't do any of those things.

As we end this debate, I urge my colleagues to listen to the American people. The Reid bill is the wrong direction.