"HEALTH CARE UNDER A REPUBLICAN CONGRESS"
Honorable Rod Chandler

Mr. Speaker, we have a health care crisis in the country -- a health care crisis that requires dramatic reform.

The nation's health care crisis is painfully reflected in a set of shocking statistics that we are all too familiar with: 34 million Americans have no health insurance and skyrocketing costs which now exceed 12 percent of this country's Gross National Product (GNP).

We're concerned about those statistics, but more importantly, we're concerned about the health and welfare of our fellow Americans.

In our rush to fundamentally change our health care system, House Republicans are convinced that whatever proposals are adopted, they must make our current system better.

Dismantling that system is not the answer.

For instance, having the federal government operate the nation's health care system would not only create a huge, and ultimately inadequate, bureaucracy, it ignores the fact that our current system of employer-provided health insurance has been very effective.

Proponents of such a plan dismiss the fact that most Americans who have health insurance, obtain it through their employers. I submit that instead of tossing aside a system with proven success, Congress should be taking steps to expand that system to those working Americans who are currently unable to gain access to it.

Mr. Speaker, a Republican Congress would allow those important steps to be taken. In doing so, we would dramatically reform our current health care system to improve and build upon it.

We will expand on those things we do well and correct those problems we all know exist within that system.

With a Republican majority in Congress, Americans would be free to choose the doctors, hospital and type of care that is best for them and their families. The federal government should not be making those decisions for American families.

Government-run national health systems restrict our range of choices by limited the options and alternatives available. In contrast, our proposal
would guarantee choice by increasing the availability of health insurance for those who presently do not have access to such insurance.

Mr. Speaker, a Republican Congress would also preserve the high quality of health care Americans have come to expect from our current system. Under that system, Americans are secure in the knowledge that the best possible care is available in the event of serious illness for them or their families.

Unfortunately, this security will be lost if advocates of a single-payer health system have their way. In fact, countries with government-operated health insurance systems fall far short of our level of health care quality, because their systems do not encourage technological advancement, just as government-run economies fail to generate economic progress.

In addition, the sense of security that Americans enjoy regarding their health care should not be limited merely to its quality.

We should be secure in the knowledge that we can change jobs without the fear of losing our health insurance.

And we should be secure in the knowledge that we will not lose our health insurance or incur sharp increases in its cost because of serious illness.

For older Americans, we want them to be secure in the knowledge that they will have adequate care should they become incapacitated. A Republican Congress would enact reforms that ensure this sense of security for all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, there is a strong consensus among all of our colleagues that health care should be available to all Americans, regardless of economic circumstances; and, that the step necessary to ensure that access should be taken now.

Unfortunately, proposals for a government-run health care system or one that would impose costly employer mandates would take years to fully implement and, even then, would fall far short of their stated goals.

A Republican Congress, however, would be prepared to enact meaningful reforms that could be implemented immediately.

This is particularly true for reforms that would assist uninsured workers who are employed by small businesses.
Specifically, we would propose reforms that would make it easier for small employers to purchase group health coverage for their employees.

We would also propose expanding community health centers and rural health care facilities to provide care in those instances where it is otherwise unavailable. In every instance, Republicans are prepared to address our health care problems now, not years from now.

The issues of health care cost and affordability seem lost or, at least, confused among proponents of a government-run health care system.

Proposals for nationalized health care and other centrally-run systems would control costs through price controls on providers.

Price controls, however, are seldom effective, and more often than not have the negative result of limiting the availability of services and products and reducing incentives for innovation.

In Canada, for instance, not only do citizens lack the level of advanced technology that Americans have, but Canadians often come to my state of Washington for care that is unavailable under the price-controlled Canadian system.

If Canadians are coming to our country for health care, I wonder where we Americans will go?

A Republican Congress would control costs through reforms that emphasize increased competition and the elimination of artificial cost stimulants in the marketplace.

These reforms include the elimination of state laws that restrict competitive development of health care plans and mandate certain types of coverage that add to the cost of health insurance plans.

Republicans would also reform medical malpractice laws which serve to increase provider costs and encourage excessive testing and other forms of defensive medicine. Such reforms would lower malpractice rates – a cost that is passed on to patients by doctors – by limiting the amount of fees that lawyers can earn in malpractice cases.

Finally, Republicans would help control excessive administrative costs by cutting down on the amount of red tape and paperwork that clutter our current health care system.
Through the use of uniform claim forms and electronic billing systems, our proposals will streamline the huge increases in health care bureaucracy.

Ironically, proponents of a national, government-run system would create yet another bureaucracy that can only add to already overwhelming administrative costs.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that our health care system is in need of dramatic reform. Some argue that we must wait for consensus on this issue.

But that kind of time is a luxury that we can't afford. We need to fundamentally change our health care system and we need to do it now.

As we move toward those reforms, let's not forget, however, that we provide a higher quality of health care than virtually any other system in world; and, we do it for the vast majority of our citizens.

The task before us is to make the best even better, and to make sure that all of our citizens have equal access.