

Bob Dole



**NEWS
FROM:**

**U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

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HEALTH CARE REFORM

DOLE/PACKWOOD "AMERICAN OPTION" PLAN MEETS PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE

I continue to hold out hope that the debate we will begin next week in this chamber will result in a bipartisan solution to our health care problems.

I must say, however, that some of the comments made by the President last night at his news conference, and followed up today by Vice-President Gore, are making it increasingly difficult to hang on to that hope.

Don't get me wrong, all of us have made our fair share of partisan comments in the U.S. Senate. But, the partisan rhetoric that is intensifying lately from the White House is not only misleading to the American public, it has the potential to do a lot of harm.

The Clinton administration continues its relentless claim that the plan that Senator Packwood and I, along with 38 other Senators, have proposed does nothing to help Americans in need.

To continue to make these claims leads me to believe that they either haven't read the plan or they don't want to talk about their own plans and they have several of them.

Pre-Existing Conditions

For example, at his press conference last evening, President Clinton introduced America to Daniel Lumley and John Cox.

Mr. Lumley is a young man who lost his arm in a motorcycle accident. The President said that Mr. Lumley is concerned he won't be able to obtain insurance because of his "very apparent pre-existing condition."

Mr. Cox left his job with health insurance for one that didn't have insurance. When his wife became ill, they decided not to seek medical care because they didn't have insurance. Finally, his wife became so ill they had to seek medical care. By that time, Mrs. Cox's cancer had progressed to the point where it could not be treated. Tragically, Mrs. Cox passed away last week.

The stories of Mr. Lumley and Mr. Cox point out what every member of the Senate has known throughout this debate. There are Americans in real need. There are Americans who need our help.

Vice President Gore today said that the Dole-Packwood plan would leave these two gentlemen out in the cold.

Dole/Packwood Plan Addresses Various Needs of Americans

The fact is that our plan would help John Cox, Daniel Lumley, and countless other lower and middle income Americans who find themselves in similar situations.

Under the Dole/Packwood plan, the insurance laws will be changed so that people with pre-existing conditions like Daniel Lumley would no longer be locked out of the system.

The Dole/Packwood plan would also help Mr. Cox, and all those who are employed by small businesses that may not be able to afford health insurance for their employees--like the Christian radio station where Mr. Cox worked.

For example, the Dole/Packwood would allow small businesses to join together in pools, thereby lowering the cost of insurance.

We would also allow small businesses to enroll their employees in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program--giving them the same choice among benefit packages that members of Congress and the President now enjoy.

The Dole/Packwood plan also contains federal subsidies for low income Americans who may not be able to afford insurance.

Throughout this debate, there has been no disagreement about the need to deal with issues like pre-existing conditions, like helping small businesses, like portability, and like subsidies for low-income Americans.

(more)

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In fact, for over a year I have said that Congress should put together a package of reforms that have universal support, and pass them into law. Just think of the people we would have helped if we had passed such a bill last year.

White House Turns Over Health Care System to Government

But, instead of taking that course of action, the White House has instead insisted on a plan that turned the American health care system to the federal government, along with one-seventh of the U.S. economy.

That plan has collapsed under the suffocation of mandates, taxes and more deficit spending. Instead of criticizing plans that are very much alive, I would suggest to the Vice President that he decide which plan he is for -- the Clinton/Gephardt plan or the Clinton/Mitchell plan?

Perhaps there's another secret task force we haven't heard about drafting a new plan.

Republican Commitment

President Clinton also said last night that Republicans have backed away from their commitment to health care reform. That is not the case.

What Republicans--and many Democrats--have done, is listened and learned from the American people.

We have heard loud and clear that they want to us to fix what's wrong with the health care system...They want to us to help people like Mr. Lumley and Mr. Cox...But they don't want us to turn the entire system over to the federal government.

The fact is that Republicans are more committed than ever to improving the best health care system in the world, and we invite the President to look at the "American Option" and to join with us in providing help to countless Americans in need...Help that doesn't involve tax increases, job-destroying mandates, an increase in the deficit, or endangering the quality and choice which are the hallmarks of our health care system.

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*Remarks delivered on the Senate floor, approximately 4:30 PM.