

Bob Dole



NEWS

LEADER

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HEALTH CARE REFORM

ON ANNIVERSARY OF CLINTON SPEECH, DOLE ASSESSES HEALTH CARE DEBATE

One year ago today, the health care debate officially began when President Clinton delivered his nationally-televised address before a joint session of Congress.

And there can be no doubt that over the past twelve months, health care has been the most debated, discussed, and dissected issue, both in Capitol Hill committee rooms, and in living rooms and coffee shops across America.

Choice, Quality, Jobs & Cost

Immediately after the President's speech, I stated that Republicans were ready to work with the President to achieve the right kind of reform--reform that built on the best health care delivery system in the world, rather than reform that destroyed it. And I asked the American people to keep four key issues in mind throughout the debate. Those issues were: Choice, quality, jobs, and cost.

After carefully studying President Clinton's health care plan for the better part of a year, the American people reached a conclusion. Adoption of the Clinton plan would mean less choice, less quality, fewer jobs, and greater cost.

Once this conclusion became apparent, the Democrat Congressional Leadership did what they had to do--they went to the White House and told him his plan was dead.

American People Want a Breather

In its place, however, they introduced proposals which may not have had the President's name on top, but had many of his proposals and ideas throughout. In fact, Senate Republicans and the American people soon concluded that they had far too much in common. Too much complexity. Too much cost. Too much bureaucracy. Too much government. Too many mandates.

And as the end of this session approaches, the American people are telling us in overwhelming numbers that they want an opportunity to catch their breath. They do not want Congress to try and pass a massive health care reform plan in the final hours of session--a plan that will have had no hearings, and a plan that no one had the time to read, much less understand.

The Republican Commitment

Some in the White House, on Capitol Hill, and in the media are now wringing their hands, and asking "what went wrong with health care reform?" Some will try to argue that Bob Dole and the Republicans killed health care reform...that we aren't sensitive to those without insurance...that we're not sensitive to those with health care problems.

The fact of the matter is that throughout this debate--in fact, even before it began--Senate Republicans have offered solutions to help those in need. We've worked to help those who can't afford insurance. We've worked to help those who can't get insurance because of a pre-existing condition. And we've worked to help those who lose their insurance when they lose or change their job.

Throughout this year, Republicans placed a number of Republican proposals on the table--Senator Chafee...Senator Nickles...Senator Gramm...Senator Lott...Senator Specter...and one by Senator Packwood and myself--which was co-sponsored by 38 of our colleagues.

No one claimed these plans were perfect. But they were substantive proposals to improve our health care system. Unfortunately, they were not allowed one minute of real consideration. Despite the fact that they would have improved coverage for millions of Americans, they were considered by some to be too minimalist to be serious.

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