



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM

COMMON SENSE REFORM PREVAILS 100-0; DOLE AMENDMENT STRENGTHENS BILL MAKING INSURANCE MORE AFFORDABLE & MORE AVAILABLE

Today the Senate has passed important legislation that will make health insurance more affordable and more available. The Clinton era of big government health care is over. In fact, President Clinton has admitted he made a mistake trying to force an overdose of government control on the American people.

Common Sense, Incremental Reforms

For nearly a decade now Republicans have been trying to prescribe common sense, by passing an incremental health insurance bill that would solve many of the problems with the availability and affordability of insurance. The Dole/Packwood bill, the Bentsen bill, and others all contained many of these common sense provisions. None has actually been signed into law.

And, although there has been vigorous opposition from our colleagues on the other side, and from the current administration over passing incremental health insurance reforms, common sense has finally prevailed. No longer will someone be denied health insurance because of preexisting conditions. And if someone loses or changes their job, that no longer has to mean a loss of insurance.

Tax Relief Makes Insurance More Affordable & Available

The legislation also contains important tax relief that complements and enhances the health reform bill to make health insurance more affordable and more available. The legislation raises the self-employed health insurance deduction to 80% permanently. Last year, one of the first things Republicans did when we took control of the House and Senate was to make this deduction permanent, and to increase it to 30%. And now we will increase it to 80%.

Our attempts to raise the deduction for the self-employed are not new. An amendment I offered last year passed the Senate with strong bi-partisan support, but that didn't stop the president from vetoing it, just as he vetoed our \$500 per child tax credit.

The legislation will also provide tax deductibility for long-term care expenses and insurance, tax exemption for high risk pools, and penalty-free IRA withdrawals for medical care. We proposed these tax items to make the bill even stronger, and to make health insurance affordable and available to more Americans.

We urge our Republican and Democratic colleagues to continue to support these provisions and the entire bill as we develop final legislation that will be signed into law.

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