

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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HEALTH CARE REFORM

HOUSE & SENATE REPUBLICANS REACH AGREEMENT ON HEALTH CARE BILL; **COMMON SENSE REFORM TO MAKE HEALTH INSURANCE MORE AFFORDABLE** **& AVAILABLE TO MILLIONS OF AMERICANS**

Last night Republicans in the House and the Senate came to an agreement on the "Kassebaum-Kennedy" health care bill. We agreed early on in this process that our goal was to make health insurance more affordable and more accessible. During the last few weeks we worked toward reaching agreement on other provisions, such as medical malpractice, mental health, multiple employer welfare arrangements, and medical savings accounts.

Medical Savings Accounts Widely & Immediately Available

As many know, medical savings accounts were perhaps the most hotly debated provision in this bill. I am particularly pleased that we have crafted a compromise that would allow Americans to immediately begin using medical savings accounts. While MSAs may not be for everyone, they are an important option that should be widely available.

I believe that Americans should have more health care choices, not fewer. And, MSAs will give families the freedom to choose their own health care providers, and to pay for preventive care that they otherwise may not be able to afford.

Republicans are united on this MSA compromise and I would urge my Democrat colleagues as well as the President, to join us in providing this important option to Americans all across the country.

The concern about availability and affordability goes back as early as the Nixon administration. Since then, there have been dozens and dozens of health care bills debated in this chamber -- the Bentsen bill, the Dole-Packwood bill, and others -- all with the purpose of making insurance more affordable and more available.

For nearly a decade, Republicans have advocated an incremental approach to health care reform -- an approach that would solve many of the problems in our current system, while still preserving the many, many virtues that have made American health care the best in the world.

President Clinton believed differently. And, he insisted that turning the American health system over to the federal government was the only solution.

So, here we are -- two years later -- still talking about this same issue. And, still concerned about access and affordability of health care. The Kassebaum-Kennedy bill will go a long way toward solving these problems. The tragedy, of course, is that millions of Americans could have been helped over two years ago had the President not insisted on an all-or-nothing approach.

(more)

Based on the agreement that was reached last night between House and Senate Republicans, I truly believe that common sense has prevailed. It is my hope that Congress will pass this bill and send it to the President for his immediate signature so that millions upon millions of Americans have the security of affordable and accessible health care.

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