

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1993

CONTACT: CLARKSON HINE
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HEALTH CARE REFORM

REPUBLICANS UNVEIL COMPREHENSIVE REFORM PLAN

Washington -- At a news conference today, Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole made the following remarks on the unveiling of the Senate Republican Health Care Task Force's plan for reform:

When it comes to health care reform, nearly everyone agrees on the diagnosis -- it's the cure that poses the problem. Make no mistake, the plan we are unveiling today is not a band-aid approach, but it's not major surgery, either. This is the right dose of reform to help cure our system.

We are here to tell you today that Republicans are committed to real, measurable, permanent reform of our health care system.

Republicans are committed to confronting the challenges being faced each day by Americans who have difficulty gaining access to care for themselves or for their loved ones.

The need for reform is real, whether it is the farmer in Kansas whose son has a chronic, costly illness that he can't get an insurance company to cover, the unemployed aircraft worker who lost his coverage with his job, or the single working mother who lost her coverage when she lost her spouse.

Coverage with Quality and Choice

Yes, all Americans want the peace of mind of knowing they're covered, that they'll stay covered and that costs will be contained. But, they also want to know that the quality, choice and innovation that characterizes American health care will continue to be a reality.

What we are here to tell you is that any plan that creates more problems than it solves is the wrong plan. And finally, that we must be cautious and honest with ourselves about where the money will come from. Our children don't need new taxpayer financed, unfunded entitlement programs on their backs.

The Clinton Plan

We are also not here to criticize the Administration or the details of the draft plan we have seen. President and Mrs. Clinton have spent months putting their proposal together. It is a serious, honest effort to deal with a complex subject. They are to be commended. I have told each of them that I am personally committed to trying to achieve a real bipartisan consensus on this tough issue.

No doubt, some elements of the Clinton plan will work and should be enacted -- for example, the insurance reforms and administrative simplification.

Others we need to know more about and weigh the trade-offs -- for example, the creation of mandatory purchasing cooperatives that are in effect monopolies.

And still other elements we know from experience don't work and should be avoided at all costs. For example, price controls and global budgets.

Republican Views

You see before you an impressive number of Republicans. We all have differing views as to how individually we might solve the health care crisis. But there is more that brings us together than there is that pulls us apart. No one will tell you the proposal Senator Chafee and others propose today is perfect. We have a lot of good ideas on the Republican side, and there will be other Republican proposals that will have their own strengths and weaknesses. But each of these efforts is a serious attempt to reserve a seat at the table when the real negotiations begin.

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No Employer Mandates

Our proposal is a constructive effort to reflect honest differences of opinion as to how to achieve our common goal of providing access to care to all Americans. Fundamentally we believe that if you give businessmen and women and individuals the tools they need to gain access to reasonably priced health care coverage, they will take that opportunity absent massive government intervention or mandates. Granted, there is much we can do to help create real competition and price sensitivity -- we believe we have done so in this proposal. There are also those situations where individuals will need our direct financial assistance -- we do that as well.

We don't promise that we can solve all the problems right away but we believe we are clearly headed in the right direction.

Senator Chafee and some of the others here today will provide the details on our proposal. But, let me briefly note what we don't do.

Our proposal is dramatically different from the Administration's in a variety of ways. Most notably, we do not mandate employers to pay for health care; we do not create mandatory health alliances that are monopolies; we do not create global budgets through the use of premium caps; nor do we create a variety of new costly benefits and entitlement programs.

Like many of my colleagues, I look at each of these issues from the perspective of my own state. There are approximately 66,000 firms in Kansas. Ninety nine percent of these firms have fewer than 250 employees. There are only about 60 firms with more than 1,000 employees. So when I hear about plans to mandate all employers to pay 80% of the cost of health insurance for all their employees, I see real payroll cost increases and real job losses. A preliminary analysis of the impact of an employer mandate in Kansas suggested we could lose up to 190,000 jobs.

I use this example not to suggest that I am opposed to employer based health insurance. In fact, I strongly believe we should do anything we can to assist both employers and employees to gain access to coverage. But how we achieve this goal has enormous implications for each of our states and for the economy as a whole. The same is true of the other issues that I have noted.

Take Time To Get It Right

Our announcement today, the announcement of the House Republican proposal this morning and the formal release of the administration's proposal is really only the beginning of a long national discussion on health care reform.

I am confident that what will ultimately emerge from this discussion is a bipartisan plan that will address the needs of the American people.

We are going to have to take the time to get it right -- we can't afford to do it wrong.

Let me close by saying that while Senate Republicans may have a difference or two on the ingredients of health care reform, we are in total agreement that Senator John Chafee has done an outstanding job as Chairman of our Health Care Task Force.

That Task Force has been meeting on nearly every Thursday morning for the past three years. So you should know that we didn't just slap this bill together as a response to the Clinton plan. Under Senator Chafee's leadership, we've been studying and discussing this issue for a long time. And as the search for solutions continues in the coming year, I have no doubt that Senator Chafee will remain a key player in the process.

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