

I want to keep you up-to-date on the latest events in the debate over health care reform. Yesterday the Senate Finance Committee passed Senator Max Baucus' (D-MT) plan for government-run health care. The Senate will now try to merge it with another plan behind closed doors before taking it to the Senate Floor.

Publicly, Senator Baucus has presented his health care bill as a more moderate alternative to President Obama and Speaker Pelosi's plans for a government-run system. Most people in Northern California don't see an \$829 billion price tag and more than \$400 billion in new taxes as "moderate." The Baucus bill taxes people who have health insurance and people who can't afford health insurance. It taxes companies that offer generous health benefits to their employees, and companies that are unable to offer health benefits that satisfy new government regulations. It taxes the innovative businesses that develop life-saving medical treatments and devices – businesses that add billions of dollars to California's economy and provide hundreds of thousands of good American jobs. And as if all these new taxes weren't enough, a private study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers indicates that, under the Baucus plan, families will see their annual health insurance premiums spike by \$4,000. That's no solution to the problem of unaffordable health care.

In truth, the bill that passed the Senate Finance Committee spends too much, taxes working families and small businesses, and will cede far too much control over our health care to the government. Unfortunately, members of the committee had no access to the actual legislative text of the bill before conducting the vote and plans have been set for a closed door negotiation that will continue to keep Americans in the dark about the future of health care reform. We are seeing the same lack of transparency on the House side, where a small handful of Democratic leaders have been meeting behind closed doors to decide what proposals they will allow to come before the House of Representatives. I believe this is unacceptable and I continue to call for an honest, open debate where Members of Congress and the American people have the opportunity to read the bill. If Congress rushes to change health care in this country forever without thinking through the consequences, we will do the American people a grave disservice.