

Given your interest in health care, I wanted to inform you that President Obama held a White House "summit" yesterday to meet with members of both parties to discuss health care reform. In spite of claims that this summit would be a genuine effort to find common ground with Republicans on this important issue, the President made clear that he has no intention of listening and will instead continue to pursue his government takeover of health care.

Republicans offered a number of substantive solutions for addressing the nation's health care problems and came to the event in good faith to discuss our ideas for bringing down health care costs. With recent news reports highlighting health insurance premium increases as high as 39% for some Californians, both parties should be able to agree that reining in out-of-control health care costs is a top priority. However, as Republican members of Congress reminded the President, his government-run plan will not fix that problem; rather, it will make it worse. In addition, it will create an unaffordable multi-trillion dollar new entitlement and impose hundreds of billions of dollars in new taxes on the American people. In fact, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office concluded that the Democrats' bill would result in health insurance premiums rising even faster than they do now.

The Republican health plan doesn't pretend to fix every problem facing our health care system overnight, but it proposes a number of steps to reduce the cost of health coverage and improve access. Specifically, Congressional Republicans discussed ideas such as allowing small businesses to pool together to get the same advantages as large companies in purchasing health coverage; giving consumers more choices by opening the health insurance market to interstate competition and allowing people to purchase less expensive catastrophic coverage; strengthening high-risk pools and reinsurance programs to provide affordable coverage for people with pre-existing medical conditions; reducing the cost of health care by eliminating frivolous malpractice lawsuits; and cracking down on waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid.

Unfortunately, the President's reaction to Republicans' ideas showed that he is still ignoring the American people's concerns. Instead of considering targeted reforms, the President continues to insist on a massive, 2400-page bill that will inevitably make things worse. And instead of trusting Americans to make the best decisions about their own health care needs, the President and House and Senate Democrats continue to believe that our personal health decisions should be put in the hands of Washington bureaucrats. I strongly disagree. It's long past time for the President and his allies in Congress to start listening to the American people. They should abandon this fatally flawed legislation and work with Republicans to find commonsense solutions that will make health care more accessible and affordable.

