

A year's worth of heated health care debate finally came down to a late night vote in the U.S. House on November 7. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi only needed the support of 218 Members of Congress to pass her sweeping government takeover of health care. By the time the counting was over, the speaker had secured her necessary 218 plus two.

Given the Democrats' 75 seat voting majority, the outcome was hardly a mandate. Indeed, 39 Democrats and 176 out of 177 Republicans voted against the bill. I was among those voting "nay," and I will continue to oppose this extremist bill.

All day and well into the night on November 7, Alabamians from Huntsville to Gulf Shores called my Washington office voicing their opinions. Echoing messages I heard during town halls this summer, the overwhelming majority rejected the Obama administration's radical remake of our health care system. The callers exhibited strong emotions ranging from frustration to outright anger that the speaker and the president would force upon them more mandates and new taxes to bring about health care system changes that they didn't want.

Due to the Democrats' strict control over debate time on the House floor, I was not allowed to speak before the final health care vote on November 7. However, I wrote the following health care statement which was printed in the Congressional Record.

"I rise today to state my objection – in the strongest way I know how – to Speaker Pelosi's health care bill.

"This bill represents everything I have fought against during my years in public service ... it raises taxes by hundreds of billions of dollars, it hides deficit spending with dubious accounting gimmicks, and it will vastly expand the federal government's scope and size in every aspect of our daily lives and take even greater control over our nation's economy.

"Among other things, this bill piles crushing mandates on small business, it wrings hundreds of billions of Medicare dollars out of our doctors, hospitals and other providers. It decimates the popular Medicare Advantage program, which millions of seniors depend on.

"Moreover, it will be the mother of all unfunded mandates on state budgets which, like my home state of Alabama, are already stretched thin because unlike the federal government, most states actually balance their budgets.

"Over the past several months I have heard from thousands of Alabamians who have called, written and emailed my office. In August, my staff and I held 19 town meetings throughout Alabama's First District where more than 5,000 people came out to voice their opposition to this massive takeover of our health care system.

"My friends and colleagues, the vast majority of the people I work for – and have heard from – are unambiguous - they do not want this bill.

"In fact, most Alabamians – and, I believe, most Americans – want to preserve what's best about our health care while lowering costs and improving access. That's why I will not only be

opposing H.R. 3962, but I am proud to support the Republican substitute.

"My Republican colleagues and I believe this bill would lower costs in both the short term and the long term, honoring our pledge for fiscal responsibility while broadening access to quality health care through lower costs and more competition.

"I only have one vote, but I will cast that vote against this legislation that the Wall Street Journal correctly dubbed, 'the worst bill ever,' and I humbly urge my colleagues to do the same."

No Federal Funds for Abortions:

Perhaps the only positive development that arose from that late night voting session was the passage of an amendment offered by Rep. Bart Stupak, D-MI, and Rep. Joe Pitts, R-PA, that would continue the prohibition of federal funds being used to pay for abortions.

I voted against this amendment which simply extends the reach of existing law banning federally-funded abortions to also cover the speaker's health care plan.

Already, many House and Senate liberals are expressing opposition to this amendment and are threatening to remove it once the House and Senate come to conference over the final health care bill. Ironically, the removal of the anti-abortion language could ultimately serve to derail final passage of a government health care bill.

The speaker and the Senate majority leader have both committed to passing a final health care bill by the end of December. The outcome remains uncertain as the speaker's health care vote lacked the strength of a mandate, and conservatives in both houses will continue to oppose this big government expansion.

Rest assured, I will remain strongly against any such effort to restrict Americans' health care quality and choice. Instead, I will continue to support targeted health care reforms which preserve your choice of health care options and doctors, expand access to care and reduce cost – all without higher taxes or government mandates.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.