

In another blow to the president's new health care reform program, the Obama administration recently admitted that a portion of its own law is unsustainable. This move has already rekindled debate over the controversial health care law's overall viability.

Back in January the newly sworn-in Republican House of Representatives voted to repeal the president's government-run health care plan and begin the process to replace it with market-based reforms built around the public's preferences for medical coverage. I also voted to repeal ObamaCare and I continue to support the House's more common sense approach of repeal and replace.

Unfortunately, the Democrat-led Senate has yet to follow the lead of the House to reset the health care debate and the overall fate of the president's health care law could ultimately rest in the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court.

During the 2009 debate over the president's new health care program, the administration repeatedly argued that its passage would help to reduce the long-term federal budget deficit. Part of this calculus was the more than \$70 billion in savings that ObamaCare supporters said could come from the long-term care program portion of the legislation. At the time, there were serious doubts raised about this claim and lawmakers added a provision in the president's health care law that the administration would have to certify to Congress that the long-term care program would be financially sound while remaining voluntary and self-financed.

On October 14, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius finally conceded that the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) long-term insurance program cannot be implemented and stay on budget. Secretary Sebelius wrote, "Despite our best analytical efforts, I do not see a viable path forward for CLASS implementation at this time."

The administration's stated decision not to implement the long-term care portion of the new health care law may not spell the end of the CLASS program, however. There is some question as to whether it can be halted given that it is part of current law. Furthermore, there is no guarantee the administration will not resurrect it at some later time. For this reason, I am joining other lawmakers in the House in supporting legislation to officially repeal the CLASS program.

Despite resistance from both the Senate and the president, the conservative House remains committed to pushing for the repeal of ObamaCare and replacing it with long-needed reforms including offering Americans the ability to purchase health insurance across state lines, expanding access to health savings accounts, and offering the right to coverage regardless of pre-existing conditions. Furthermore, we support measures to lower health care costs, including medical liability reform.

No doubt the administration's apparent retreat from a portion of its health care plan will add momentum to the ongoing effort to repeal and replace ObamaCare with true patient-centered care for all.

Veterans Job Bill Passes:

The latest unemployment numbers reflect little change in the jobless rates nationally or in Alabama. While the House has passed bill after bill this year to spur economic growth by lessening the regulatory burden on business, the Senate and President Obama have unfortunately resisted our efforts.

Of all the jobless statistics, one that is particularly troubling is the level of unemployment among our veterans. Like all sectors of our workforce, veterans have seen higher jobless rates in recent months and more needs to be done to enable them to transition into civilian employment after returning from serving their country.

I cosponsored and voted for the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act which passed the House on October 12. The "VOW Act", authored by my friend, Congressman Jeff Miller of Pensacola, has been described as "the most comprehensive, thoughtful legislation that has been introduced to get our veterans out of the unemployment lines and into meaningful jobs."

It boosts transition assistance for service members and strengthens job protection laws for National Guard members and Reservists. It also creates a new job-training program for older veterans. The VOW Act has been referred to the Senate.

Social Security COLA Announced:

Last week, the Social Security Administration announced a 3.6 percent cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries.

The Social Security COLA will take effect in January 2012 while the SSI COLA will begin on December 30, 2011.

This is the first such COLA increase since 2009 and is based upon an increase in the consumer price index as calculated by the U.S. Department of Labor.

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.

For release: October 24, 2011