

Last month, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a revised analysis of the impact of penalties to be levied on uninsured Americans under President Obama's Affordable Care Act. Not surprising, the taxing effect of the health care law is greater than earlier forecast.

The Associated Press observed, "Nearly 6 million Americans – significantly more than first estimated – will face a tax penalty under President Barack Obama's health overhaul for not getting insurance, congressional analysts said Wednesday. Most would be in the middle class. The new estimate amounts to an inconvenient fact for the administration, a reminder of what critics see as broken promises."

By 2016, the CBO projects that collections from the new tax will amount to \$7 billion, rising to \$8 billion a year afterwards. According to the AP story, this would affect individuals earning \$55,850 or less and families of four earning \$115,250 or less. The implications of a middle income tax increase were not lost on the reporter who further observed that Mr. Obama previously vowed not to hike taxes on those earning less than \$200,000, or married couples with incomes less than \$250,000.

Tax-related paperwork will also increase under the health care law. The group Americans for Tax Reform estimates the Obamacare tax mandate will require 140 million families to complete and submit compliance forms to the IRS stating if they have "qualifying" health insurance coverage. As ATR correctly points out, the Obamacare mandate tax is but one of nearly 20 new or higher taxes buried in the health care law.

Despite the administration's promises of slower growth of health care costs as a result of the Affordable Care Act, many working Americans have already seen their costs increase. The nonpartisan Health Care Cost Institute reports that expenses associated with employer-sponsored health care rose at a faster clip in 2011 than in 2010. The president's health care law was signed in 2010.

I share the view of many that the Affordable Care Act is the wrong prescription for making health care more affordable. It not only overreaches by limiting patient access to their choice of doctors, but – as we have learned – it will add to Americans' tax burden. Since January 2011, the House has twice voted to repeal Obamacare and voted on 30 separate bills to repeal,

defund and dismantle the health care law. Without cooperation from the Senate, unfortunately, our efforts have yet to take hold.

Most Americans believe that health care costs are too high and coverage is unreachable for many. The House agrees and has taken action to pass separate reform legislation to improve access to care and reduce cost – all without the heavy hand of government intervening in personal care choices.

One of the major contributors to rising health care costs is frivolous lawsuits. On March 22, 2012, the House passed the Preserving Access to Healthcare (PATH) Act. This legislation would reform medical liability laws to stem junk lawsuits that drive up health care expenses. According to the Harvard School of Public Health, 40 percent of malpractice lawsuits are "without merit". The threat of such frivolous suits often forces doctors to engage in costly defensive medicine. Once again, the Senate has failed to act.

The House also passed legislation on June 7, 2012, to increase flexibility for families using Health Savings Accounts and Flexible Spending Accounts. Furthermore, the House-passed fiscal 2013 budget would strengthen Medicare for seniors and offer guaranteed coverage options to future seniors regardless of pre-existing conditions.

As I have said before, we can do more to improve the cost and availability of health care and health insurance without a big government approach. The House will continue to stand up to Obamacare's costly mandates and demonstrate that solutions can be adopted to preserve Americans' access to the care and doctors they prefer.

**Bonner-Sewell Town Hall a Success:**

I would like to thank everyone who took the time out of their busy schedules to participate in a congressional town hall jointly hosted by Congresswoman Terri Sewell, D-Birmingham, and myself last Thursday.

A large crowd of people came to the Jackson City Hall to share their views on important issues

from Afghanistan to the economy. This was the second time in as many years that Terri and I have co-hosted a town meeting.

Clarke County and the City of Jackson are split between the First and Seventh Congressional Districts.

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.

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