

---

**EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE**

**Congressman George Miller, Chairman**

---

Tuesday, June 23, 2009  
Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “Tri-Committee Discussion Draft for Health Care Reform”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “The House Tri-Committee Discussion Draft for Health Care Reform.”*

\*\*\*

Good afternoon.

First, I’d like to welcome Congressman Kline to his first hearing as our committee’s incoming Senior Republican.

I look forward to working together to rebuild our country and improve the lives of America’s families.

Today, we will examine the House Tri-Committee discussion draft for health care reform.

This hearing marks the next step in our critical and historic effort to guarantee all Americans access to quality, affordable health care.

***UNSUSTAINABLE COSTS TO FAMILIES***

No one can argue that our nation’s current health care path is sustainable. Premiums and health care costs have skyrocketed for families and businesses alike.

In today’s system, insurance company bureaucrats hold all the power. They get to decide whether to cover the care a doctor recommends for their patient.

They can deny coverage or delay treatment based on a pre-existing condition – sending millions of people into devastating debt and prolonging anxiety or suffering from unattended care.

***PORTABILITY***

Americans with health care are deeply concerned that their employer may scale back or cancel their coverage, and that if they lose their job they will lose their health insurance too.

## ***COST OF UNINSURED***

The cost of the 47 million uninsured people in our country is also unsustainable. Lack of coverage jeopardizes not only their personal health but our nation's economic condition.

The uninsured cost the rest of us about \$1,100 extra per year per family in higher premiums.

These numerous and serious weaknesses in our health care system have combined to deliver a crushing blow to America's families, businesses and our country's fiscal future.

## ***TRI-COMMITTEE DRAFT PROPOSAL***

Last Friday, the three committees of jurisdiction unveiled our discussion draft for health care reform.

It reflects months of hard work and extensive meetings with Democrats and Republicans, Senators, the Congressional Budget Office, Administration officials, and stakeholders, engaged in an open and collaborative process.

Consistent with President Obama's goals, our draft builds on what works and fixes what's broken in our current system.

It lays the foundation for an American solution that will reduce costs, guarantee choice of doctors and plans, and ensure access to affordable, quality health care for all.

For Americans just beginning to pay attention to the health care debate, here are critical ways that our reforms will directly help you and your family:

- Our proposed reforms will cover at least 95 percent of Americans;
- If you like your doctor or health plan, you can keep them;
- You won't have to worry about coverage if your employer drops it or you lose your job;
- Co-pays for preventive care won't exist;
- Premiums or coverage will not be based on pre-existing conditions, gender, or occupation;
- You will have the choice of a high-quality, affordable public health insurance plan; and
- Your doctors and nurses will have access to the best information to offer you individualized care.

## ***REDUCE COSTS***

Our draft will drive down health care costs in several ways.

First, it ensures competition in the marketplace by establishing a new health insurance exchange that includes a strong public health insurance option that will compete on a level playing field and keep insurance companies honest. This will lower costs for everyone.

Second, it trims costs by simplifying paperwork and preventing waste, fraud and abuse.

Third – and most importantly – it controls costs by reducing spending. Health reform will be fully paid for.

President Obama has outlined a menu of cost reductions that we will consider and have to make very tough decisions about.

But this weekend’s pledge by pharmaceutical companies demonstrates that the President is successfully building a diverse coalition committed to reducing spending while improving affordability.

Our draft outlines where another significant portion of this funding will come from: promoting efficiencies in Medicare and Medicaid and ending overpayments to private plans.

This does not mean cutting services. Instead, we will improve them and strengthen their long-term sustainability, so they can continue to provide quality, dependable health care for years to come.

### ***GUARANTEE CHOICE***

Next, our reforms will guarantee people a real choice of doctors, nurses, and insurance plans through the exchange.

Under our draft, if you like what you have, you keep it.

People who aren’t covered will be able to choose from a menu of affordable plans, including quality public and private health insurance plans.

This coverage will be portable and guaranteed – no matter if an employer drops coverage or people lose their jobs.

### ***QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE CARE***

Finally, our draft ensures that all Americans can afford quality health care, based on a sliding scale.

Every plan offered through the exchange will include essential benefits, including no co-pays for preventative care, dental and vision coverage for children, and caps on annual out-of-pocket expenses that will protect against medical bankruptcy.

It ensures that care is as it should be: patient-centered, driven by patients' needs and the expertise of doctors.

It invests in prevention and wellness and it ends insurance companies' discriminatory practices.

It also requires shared responsibility by individuals, employers and the government to ensure that all Americans have access to these benefits.

***'NO' IS OFF THE TABLE***

In the coming weeks, we will continue to seek input from stakeholders and lawmakers.

But many are also clamoring for inaction.

Let me be very clear on this one point.

On behalf of every parent seeking care for their sick child, and every American hoping that health care costs are not their last stop before bankruptcy, I can assure you: The one thing that is 'off the table' in this effort is saying 'No' to health care reform.

To succeed, we will need the cooperation of all of our colleagues and our President.

There will be tremendous pressure to think only about one narrow interest or another.

Instead, we must think of the future of our country and every American who expects that this year will be the year that we make our health care system part of America's shining future and not the cause of further financial chaos.

###