

By now, most everyone following the national health care debate has listened closely to months of daily news reports, discussed reform efforts with family and friends, or taken the time to read proposed legislation. The ongoing effort to reform our health care system has taken several turns over the last couple months, changing numerous times between the House and Senate and, in the process, creating a patchwork of initiatives that will ultimately impact every American household.

Health Care Resources and Timeline on House action:

June 4, 2009. [Hunter discusses need for balanced approach on health care](#) ;

July 14, 2009. House Democrats introduce [H.R. 3200, America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009](#) ;

July 15, 2009. [Hunter delivers statement in preparation for consideration of H.R. 3200 by House Education and Labor Committee](#) ;

July 17, 2009. [Hunter successfully offers small business hardship exemption amendment](#) during consideration by House Education and Labor Committee;

July 17, 2009. [House Education and Labor Committee passes H.R. 3200](#) along party lines, with Rep Hunter voting no;

August 21, 2009. [Hunter health care commentary featured in local newspapers](#) ;

September 20, 2009. [Hunter commentary featured in the San Diego Union Tribune](#) ;

October 2009. House Democrats begin consolidating health care bills passed by three separate House Committees;

October 21, 2009. Hunter cosponsors [H.R. 3400](#) , an alternative proposal to increase portability, control costs and improve access;

October 27, 2009. Hunter takes to House floor in opposition to government health care takeover. [Watch video clip](#) ;

October 29, 2009. [House Democrats introduce H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act](#)

October 29, 2009. [Hunter reiterates opposition to government-run option and takeover of America's health care system](#) imposed under H.R. 3962;

November 3, 2009. [House Republicans introduce alternative to H.R. 3962](#) . [View a summary](#) ;

November 2, 2009. House Democrats make [managers amendment](#) to H.R. 3962 available;

November 7, 2009. House begins consideration of H.R. 3962 and passes legislation by a vote of [220-215](#) . Hunter is joined by 39 Democrats and all but one Republican in voting against the bill. [View press release](#) .

Through my website and other community forums, I have consistently stated my opposition to any type of public option that discourages the level of competition that is needed to bring down costs and extend quality coverage to those who are currently uninsured. Without question, the status quo is insufficient and responsible health care reform is a necessity, especially when considering the relationship between our health care system and economy. Still, that does not mean a government-run option is the only solution.

Some of you have shared your personal stories involving insurance companies. Others have

expressed strong concerns with the possibility of a government-run insurance option but remain supportive of targeted reform measures. There is certainly a legitimate opportunity to initiate quality reform and break down the obstacles that are impeding the availability of care and contributing to such high costs, but we need not destroy the basic foundation of our health care system in the process.

While I support promoting competition in the health insurance marketplace, the latest reform proposal would do just the opposite, crowding out competition and eventually making the government the primary health care provider in America. In fact, H.R. 3962 creates 111 new government programs, adding more bureaucratic red tape to a system that is already far too difficult for most Americans to understand or even navigate.

What's more, new mandates would impose \$135 billion in taxes on businesses that cannot afford to finance worker health coverage - a scenario that the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says could significantly reduce the hiring of workers and lead to wage stagnation. Other estimates suggest that as many as 5.5 million jobs could be lost - behind \$729.5 billion in cumulative taxes increases -- as businesses scramble to comply with new federal mandates.

Inevitably, this would increase individual policy rates and drive up health care costs for businesses. During consideration of the initial health care reform legislation (H.R. 3200) by the Education and Labor Committee, I successfully offered an amendment to provide small businesses and communities impacted by mandates in the bill an opportunity for relief. My amendment created an exemption process for businesses facing layoffs or financial distress, contingent upon review and approval by the Secretary of Labor. Though initially accepted, this amendment was watered down significantly by House leadership, replacing it with a study instead. For me and many others, including countless employers in San Diego County, it is a troubling sign that the interests of the small businesses have been so readily overlooked.

Our goal moving forward must be to responsibly reform our health care system without adding new layers of unwanted bureaucracy, contributing to already record debt levels, disrupting the quality of care and imposing new taxes on families and businesses - all of which the current health care plan does. There is still time to come together behind a sensible approach that reflects our common interests on health care reform and meets the needs of every American.