

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congressman John Olver released the following response to President Obama's Joint Session speech on health care reform:

Congressman John Olver said, "As always, the President gave a very powerful speech. He clearly and forcefully laid out how enormous the stakes are for the country. This is the most important initiative that I have seen in my 19 years in Congress. It would be a great tragedy if we did not seize this opportunity for real, meaningful reform."

Arguments for Reform: The Current System is Expensive & Doesn't Work

"We have the most expensive health care system in the world, bar none. Yet our gold plated system fails to achieve the most basic measures of health. America spends six percent more of our total economy on health care than our major industrial competitors, yet suffers the highest infant mortality rate and lowest life expectancy. There is clearly something wrong with this picture.

"There are those who claim that we cannot fix our broken health care system now, during an economic crisis. The truth is we cannot afford not to. Healthcare premiums have risen every year for more than a decade; at least 3 times as fast as family incomes have risen. If we do nothing those rising health insurance premiums will eat up an ever larger slice of family incomes."

Public Option

"I strongly support the inclusion of a public option. A public option will keep the private insurance companies honest while providing another alternative. Choices are usually seen as a positive thing in this country, yet all of the sudden, the choice of a public option has some up in arms. A government administered health plan is nothing new or scary; a sizeable portion of our population is already covered by a government plan."[\[1 \]](#)

The Opposition to Reform: Health Care Companies & the Republican Party

"The opposition is committed to the status quo. The pharmaceutical and health insurance companies have a lot at stake in this and don't want their apple carts turned over. They are aggressively protecting their outrageous salaries and profit margins."

"The major role of the Republican party right now is to deny our President a victory. Who gains politically from this pales in comparison to what happens if we do not do it."

###

[1] Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans Health Administration and Tri-Care.

