

Congressman Olver: "Most Important Initiative in My 19 years in Congress"

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congressman John Olver joined a majority in the House of Representatives in support of H.R. 3962, America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009. The bill passed 220 to 215.

Congressman John Olver said, "This is the most important initiative that I have seen in my 19 years in Congress. 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. There is clearly something wrong with this picture. Today, we've taken a very important first step to making affordable, quality health care available for all Americans."

Congressman John Olver continued to highlight a few key aspects of the House-passed bill:

Includes a Public Option

- Will be available in the New Health Insurance Exchange, along with all of the private health insurance plans.
- Participation will be completely voluntary.

"Since day one, I have been a strong supporter of a public option. Under the current system, insurance companies spend 30 percent of the premiums they collect on overhead - shockingly high executive salaries, lobbying, political contributions and legal fees. There is simply no need for that. A public option will keep private insurance companies honest, while providing more choices for people. The public option will be just that, a choice."

Shifts the Focus to Preventive & Primary Care

- Eliminates cost sharing for preventive services delivered by Medicare & Medicaid.
- Establishes new incentives, such as training opportunities, scholarships and student loan

repayment programs for primary care providers.

"Far too many in the country receive care at the most expensive place, the emergency room, and at the most expensive time, when in crisis. True reform requires shifting our focus to primary and preventive care. This new approach will save both dollars and lives."

Bans Pre-existing Conditions by 2013

"For this reform to amount to anything, we must end the pre-existing condition game. The insurance companies created quite a beneficial system for themselves. Their constant loophole-seeking has produced horror stories all over the country. A primary goal of this legislation is to encourage stability. If people know they are not at risk for losing their coverage, perhaps they'll be more likely to seek preventive care. And that's exactly what we want to encourage."

Improves the Medicare Part D Drug Program/Closes Donut Hole

- Immediate, on January 1st, reduces the size of the donut hole by \$500 & cuts brand name drug prices by 50 percent for those in the donut hole.
- Eliminates donut hole completely by 2019.
- Requires the Secretary to negotiate with drug manufacturers to get the best deal possible for beneficiaries.

"We should be ashamed of ourselves for allowing drug companies to overcharge our seniors. Medicare is the only government health care program that does not negotiate for lower drug costs, and seniors living on fixed incomes are the ones paying the price. We've got to take this reform initiative as an opportunity to right the wrongs. We've got to close the donut hole and lower drug prices for seniors."

The Senate must still approve its health reform bill and then both chambers will have to approve a reconciled bill before it goes to the president's desk to be signed into law.

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