

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Statement of Congresswoman Nita Lowey (D-NY)

March 21, 2010

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of enacting historic health care reform.

Over the past fifteen months, I have held countless meetings with community organizations, small business owners, senior citizens, doctors, nurses, and patients, joined public forums and community meetings, and held telephone town halls. It is clear to me the status quo is unsustainable. Without action, individuals would continue to be denied coverage and care, more families would go into bankruptcy due to the costs of care, and businesses would continue to struggle to cover their employees.

Some benefits will be evident almost immediately after this bill is signed. The most egregious practices of insurance companies, like denying coverage for children due to pre-existing conditions and dropping coverage when patients become sick, will be illegal. Small businesses will gain tax credits to provide affordable insurance to their employees. Senior citizens will benefit from immediate steps to close the Medicare prescription drug "donut hole."

I have heard hundreds of personal stories. A social worker in Ardsley earning \$53,000 per year whose out-of-pocket insurance premium just increased by \$110 to \$831 per month. The man from White Plains who was denied life saving cancer medication by his insurance company until my intervention. The small business owner from Ossining whose premium costs increased 40 percent this year.

I want to assure you that:

- Medicare benefits will be strengthened by closing the prescription drug 'donut hole,' eliminating charges for preventive care, and extending the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund.
- The vast majority of families in Westchester and Rockland Counties will see absolutely no change in their income taxes due to this bill. I fought to protect our region, and I continue my work to index federal taxes to cost of living, which would help residents in our expensive area.
- Small businesses with fewer than 50 employees are exempt from employer requirements and some will immediately be offered tax credits to provide coverage for their employees.
- This legislation will not provide taxpayer funding for abortion, and in fact I am not pleased with new obstacles to reproductive health care.
- And finally, this bill will reduce the federal deficit by more than \$143 billion in the first ten years and more than \$1.2 trillion in the second ten years after passage.

Instead of passing the House bill, the Senate adopted a flawed bill that I will support for the sole purpose of immediately making improvements through reconciliation to help American families and businesses.

Although the legislation we passed this week is not perfect, it will rein in skyrocketing insurance premiums for families, prevent the worst practices of the insurance industry, help 30 million uninsured Americans gain access to care, allow insured Americans to keep their coverage if they like it, help small businesses afford coverage for their employees, allow children up to 26 years old to stay on their parents' plans and protect Medicare for senior citizens.

Thank you Madam Speaker, and I yield back my time.