

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA
CHAIRMAN

JOHN D. DINGELL, MICHIGAN
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS
RICK BOUCHER, VIRGINIA
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NEW JERSEY
BART GORDON, TENNESSEE
BOBBY L. RUSH, ILLINOIS
ANNA G. ESHOO, CALIFORNIA
BART STUPAK, MICHIGAN
ELIOT L. ENGEL, NEW YORK
GENE GREEN, TEXAS
DIANA DEGETTE, COLORADO
VICE CHAIRMAN

LOIS CAPPS, CALIFORNIA
MIKE DOYLE, PENNSYLVANIA
JANE HARMAN, CALIFORNIA
JAN SCHAKOWSKY, ILLINOIS
CHARLES A. GONZALEZ, TEXAS
JAY INSLEE, WASHINGTON
TAMMY BALDWIN, WISCONSIN
MIKE ROSS, ARKANSAS
ANTHONY D. WEINER, NEW YORK
JIM MATHESON, UTAH
G.K. BUTTERFIELD, NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLIE MELANCON, LOUISIANA
JOHN BARROW, GEORGIA
BARON P. HILL, INDIANA
DORIS O. MATSUI, CALIFORNIA
DONNA CHRISTENSEN, VIRGIN ISLANDS
KATHY CASTOR, FLORIDA
JOHN SARBANES, MARYLAND
CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
ZACHARY T. SPACE, OHIO
JERRY MCNERNEY, CALIFORNIA
BETTY SUTTON, OHIO
BRUCE BRALEY, IOWA
PETER WELCH, VERMONT

JOE BARTON, TEXAS
RANKING MEMBER

RALPH M. HALL, TEXAS
FRED UPTON, MICHIGAN
CLIFF STEARNS, FLORIDA
NATHAN DEAL, GEORGIA
ED WHITFIELD, KENTUCKY
JOHN SHIMKUS, ILLINOIS
JOHN B. SHADEGG, ARIZONA
ROY BLUNT, MISSOURI
STEVE BUYER, INDIANA
GEORGE RADANOVICH, CALIFORNIA
JOSEPH R. PITTS, PENNSYLVANIA
MARY BONO MACK, CALIFORNIA
GREG WALDEN, OREGON
LEE TERRY, NEBRASKA
MIKE ROGERS, MICHIGAN
SUE WILKINS MYRICK, NORTH CAROLINA
JOHN SULLIVAN, OKLAHOMA
TIM MURPHY, PENNSYLVANIA
MICHAEL C. BURGESS, TEXAS
MARSHA BLACKBURN, TENNESSEE
PHIL GINGREY, GEORGIA
STEVE SCALISE, LOUISIANA

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

MAJORITY (202) 225-2927
FACSIMILE (202) 225-2525
MINORITY (202) 225-3641

energycommerce.house.gov

Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce

Markup of H.R. 3200, America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 July 16, 2009

Today we take up America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009. This legislation fulfills our commitment to deliver what the American people voted for last November: access to affordable, quality health insurance coverage for all Americans.

The fundamental question before each of us is: will our constituents and our nation be better off in 10 years if we enact this bill, or will they be better off if we do nothing?

Today we have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of all of our constituents.

From today, when a constituent comes to us and says, "I can't get health insurance because I have multiple sclerosis or diabetes or any other health condition," – we will have an answer.

When people lose their jobs and can't get affordable health insurance, we will have an answer.

When a constituent tells us, "They raised my premium or set it so high I can't afford it because of my health condition" – we will have an answer.

When a small business tells us the rates for their employees went up when one of them had a catastrophic illness – we will have an answer.

When our providers tell us they are going under because so many people come in without insurance, or have no place to get care except the emergency room – we will have an answer.

When people ask, "How can the greatest richest country in the world have 46 million people without health insurance?" – we will have an answer.

When people ask, “Why don’t we prevent illness before it starts, and manage chronic diseases so people don’t end up in the hospital when it could have been avoided with better care?” – we will have an answer.

When seniors say they can’t pay for their drugs when they go into the donut hole in their coverage, we will have an answer.

And when we ask ourselves: “Have we started to make those significant changes in our health care system that will change the ever increasing costs and inefficient way we deliver care?” We will have an answer.

That we have arrived at this pivotal point is a tribute to John Dingell, our Chairman Emeritus, who has made health reform a centerpiece of his long and distinguished legislative career.

He has faithfully carried on the work of his father, who first introduced such legislation in 1943 – 66 years ago. This effort now qualifies for Medicare!

I also want to thank Chairman Pallone and all of the Members of the Committee who have made contributions to the Dingell bill. I am honored to be a cosponsor.

H.R. 3200 is reform in its truest sense: expansion of access to health care, improvements in the quality of health care services, better public health outcomes, and control of costs for the benefit of all Americans.

Today America’s health care system is no longer affordable. At \$2.5 trillion dollars per year – 16% of our GDP – it costs too much for individuals, businesses, and the economy generally. And it delivers too little quality care.

Our legislation delivers fundamental change. Health insurers will have to compete based on cost and quality, not on who is most effective at avoiding the sick.

Our bill will unleash a series of delivery system reforms to reduce health care costs. If we do not enact this legislation, there will be no significant cost control reforms and health care costs will continue to rise.

Our legislation will provide insurance coverage to 97% of Americans. If we do nothing, the number of uninsured will rise to 54 million.

And our bill will dramatically increase access to preventive services.

Under our legislation, Americans will always have access to affordable coverage wherever they go. Families can pick the insurance plan they want and their own doctors.

And this legislation is fiscally responsible. We will assure that it will be deficit neutral and

is fully paid for.

Today is a historic moment for our Committee. I am certain we will be worthy of the opportunity we have to make a decisive difference for the better for the lives and health of the American people.