

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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**Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman**  
**Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Markup of “H.R. 452, Medicare Decisions Accountability Act of 2011”**  
**Subcommittee on Health**  
**February 29, 2012**

Today the Republicans are mounting another political attack on the Affordable Care Act.

For the last year, House Republicans have been claiming – erroneously – that we cannot afford to maintain Medicare’s promise to seniors. Yet today, they will vote to repeal provisions in the Affordable Care Act that will save Medicare over \$2 billion. And they have identified no way to pay for the costs they are adding to Medicare.

Their logic makes no sense: they say we can’t afford Medicare, yet they want to eliminate one of the innovations in the Affordable Care Act that keeps Medicare costs under control.

It is this kind of political opportunism that is alienating so many Americans from Congress.

The fact is, the Affordable Care Act is working. It is not quite two years since the enactment of this historic legislation and already it is driving down health care costs and increasing health care benefits.

Last year alone, nearly four million seniors and people with disabilities in Medicare saved over \$2 billion on prescription drugs as a result of the Affordable Care Act. Over 30 million seniors received free preventative services.

At the same time, actuaries now estimate that Medicare costs will be over \$100 billion lower in 2020 due in part to the reforms Congress enacted.

It is not only seniors in Medicare who are benefiting from health reform. In the private marketplace, over two million young adults now have health insurance coverage thanks to the new law.

Over 50 million Americans received expanded coverage of preventive services, and 50,000 Americans now have health coverage through the Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan – a lifeline for those with cancer, AIDS, and other conditions that make them ineligible for coverage in a marketplace where insurers are allowed to discriminate based on pre-existing conditions.

And now, as a result of the Affordable Care Act, insurers who want to hike their rates by 10% or more have to justify it. The law shines a spotlight on unreasonable rate increases and many have been denied, saving consumers money.

The facts are in, and they show the Affordable Care Act is working. But my Republican colleagues want to deny reality. They seem to have an obsession with undermining a program they call “Obamacare” – even if it would leave millions of Americans, including seniors in Medicare, at the mercy of insurance companies.

Today’s target is the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB). IPAB was created to be a back-stop – and let’s be clear, that is what it is – in the event that the other delivery system reforms don’t fully achieve the expected results.

We all hope the IPAB will be irrelevant. If the act works as we expect, it will be. But in either case, beneficiary benefits and access to care will be protected.

That’s not the case under the Republican plan. Their idea is to shift costs to beneficiaries, end the Medicare program, and replace it with a voucher. Costs to seniors would skyrocket by \$6,000 in just ten years.

There are aspects of IPAB that could be improved. Some on our side of the aisle have legitimate questions about its intrusion into the prerogatives of Congress. But it sure beats the Republican alternative.

That is why we should give the positive changes in the Affordable Care Act time to work. And that is why the discipline of having a back stop like IPAB makes sense.

Let’s recognize today’s markup for what it is: an attempt to discredit the Affordable Care Act and embarrass the President.

This bill may pass today, and it may pass the House, but it is not going to pass the Senate and it is not going to be enacted into law.

The American people are getting frustrated with Congress. They want us to stop posturing and start addressing their needs. Regrettably, today’s markup is another demonstration of how out of touch this Committee has become.