

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Full Committee Markup on H.R. 1213, H.R. 1214, H.R. 1215, H.R. 1216, H.R. 1217, and
H.R. ____, a Bill to Clarify NTIA and RUS Authority to Return Reclaimed Stimulus Funds
to the U.S. Treasury
Committee on Energy and Commerce
April 5, 2011

Today we will consider five controversial health bills and one noncontroversial telecommunications bill.

The five health bills are not about the merits of mandatory versus discretionary spending, as our Republican colleagues continue to assert. Nor are they about protecting Congress' prerogative to fund or not to fund health programs. We make those kinds of choices – often difficult choices – all the time.

And they are certainly not about the substance of any of the programs that are the subject of the five bills.

Today I am releasing fact sheets for every member on this Committee about the impact of the bills. Each fact sheet includes state- and district-level information about premature deaths, smoking rates, obesity rates, and how the Prevention and Public Health Fund – which would be defunded under the legislation – addresses these public health threats. To take one example, in Chairman Upton's home state of Michigan, there are 37,264 premature deaths each year. Counties in Mr. Upton's district like Calhoun and St. Joseph have some of the highest smoking rates in the state. Yet under the legislation we are considering today, Michigan would lose \$8 million in funding to address these public health threats.

Pure and simple, this mark up represents the Republicans' newest line of attack to disrupt, dismantle, and ultimately destroy the Affordable Care Act.

They are doing so by sacrificing longstanding bipartisan policies to advance a narrow partisan ideology.

For many years, Republicans have joined with Democrats in making the case to do more to prevent disease and promote health, and in turn, to cut health care costs. But today, the

Committee will vote to end funding for the first and only federal program with dedicated, ongoing resources designed to make us a healthier nation.

For many years, Republicans carried the mantle for state-based health reform. But today, the Committee will vote to take away money states need – at a time of enormous pressure for them – to develop their own, unique insurance exchange programs that are the cornerstones for the full implementation of the health reform law.

Republicans have scolded Democrats for not doing enough to expand the country's health work force. They highlight the need for more physicians – particularly primary care providers – to meet the growing demand for services. But today, the Committee will vote to cut support for a work force program that would enlarge that pool of providers. And the Committee will also vote to eliminate funding for school-based health centers that provide primary care services to vulnerable children and adolescents.

We also have before the Committee a bill that would terminate mandatory funding for the only evidence-based teen pregnancy program but retain mandatory spending for an abstinence-only-until-married program that study after study shows is ineffective. This is a blatant double standard that may advance a partisan agenda, but makes absolutely no policy sense.

Each one of these programs was established in the Affordable Care Act. Apparently, no program in the bill – even those with strong bipartisan roots – is immune from partisan attack.

And the partisan agenda that these bills represent will not be a winning formula – not for health reform, not for the public's health, and not for the American people. We may lose the votes today. But these bills will not go anywhere in the Senate.

Today we are also considering a bill that tells the Commerce Department and the Agriculture Department to deposit in the Treasury any Recovery Act funds for broadband deployment that are returned by grant or loan recipients.

As far as I can tell, this is exactly what current law requires. Under the Pay it Back Act, which is part of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act, any Recovery Act funds that are “recaptured” must be rescinded and deposited in the General Fund of the Treasury for the purpose of deficit reduction.

While this legislation appears to be unnecessary, I will vote for the bill. Effective oversight of federal spending should never be partisan. Moreover, I appreciate that Chairman Walden has made efforts to work with House Democrats and the Administration in drafting this legislation.

I hope to be able to support the amendment that the majority will offer today that reflects suggestions from the agencies.