

August 1, 2009

Republican Response to President's Address delivered by SD Senator John Thune:

“Hello, I’m Senator John Thune of South Dakota. With summer in full swing, children across the country are enjoying vacations and time off from school. Too many of their parents, however, don’t get a vacation from their worries about important issues like the rising costs of health care. Those parents, like many Americans, are looking to us in Washington for help, and for real solutions.

“Republicans in Congress know that serious health care reform is a top priority of the American people, and we are committed to getting it done. But we need to get the right reform, rather than just rush something through that could leave us in far worse shape in the future.

“Republicans want health care reform that works. Reform that brings down costs for families and small businesses, and reform that provides better care to more people. On all these points, the current proposals by the President and the Democrat leadership in Congress fall short. Their plan for government-run health care would disrupt our current system and force millions of Americans who currently enjoy their employer-based coverage into a new health care plan run by government bureaucrats.

“In this difficult recession, Americans and our government are already over-extended. The Democrats who control Congress have been spending money and racking up debt at an unprecedented pace. And their plan for government-run health care would only make things worse. Once implemented, the Democrat plan would spend more than \$2 trillion and further increase our exploding deficit. Their plan would pile up higher costs, create new Washington bureaucracies, and burden every state through new requirements on Medicaid.

“Governors and state legislators from both parties have said that increased Medicaid costs would overwhelm their already-strained state budgets. In fact, one Democratic governor last week called the increases proposed by Congressional Democrats ‘the mother of all unfunded mandates.’”

“In my home state of South Dakota, the new Medicaid requirements could require \$45 million a year in new state spending. That may not sound like much, but for a small state that’s required by law to balance its budget every year, it’s a lot. That money would have to come from somewhere, and that means either higher taxes or cuts to other priorities. That’s what we’re facing not just in South Dakota, but nationwide.

“Americans don’t want to lose their high quality health care, and they definitely don’t want to pay trillions of dollars for a government takeover of health care that could lead to the same denial, delay, and rationing of treatment that we’ve seen in other countries that have gone down this path.

“Republicans think there’s a better way. We’ve put forth proposals that will cut costs and improve care. And we can accomplish health care reform while keeping patients and their doctors in charge, not bureaucrats and politicians.

“Real reform should allow small businesses to pool together to buy affordable health insurance for their

employees.

“Real reform should protect doctors and hospitals from frivolous lawsuits, so they can stop practicing defensive medicine and instead focus on practicing patient-focused medicine.

“Real reform should encourage wellness and prevention programs that have been proven to cut costs.

“And real reform should give people who buy their own insurance the same tax breaks as those who get insurance through their employers.

“These and other commonsense solutions would provide real reform for our health care system rather than the dangerous and costly experiment that Democrats are proposing.

“I hope that as we continue this important debate, we can put aside the politics of Washington and tackle health care reform in the bipartisan way that Americans deserve.

“It’s time for real reform that works, not the same old answers of more money and more government. Real health care reform should cost Americans less money, not more. It should provide better quality, not worse. And it should empower patients, not government bureaucrats. By working together, we can do just that.

“Thank you.”