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By Congressman Tom Rooney
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Nearly three months after President Obama signed the health care bill into law, questions remain about what the new law will mean for American patients, small businesses and doctors.

Unfortunately, Democratic leaders forced a vote on the bill immediately after they finished rewriting it behind closed doors. Even Congressmen who supported the bill did not have time to read the latest version and study its effects. As a result, across the country confusion reigned about how the new law would change our health care system and when those changes would go into effect.

My office continues to receive hundreds of questions from constituents about what the bill will mean for them. To help answer some of these questions, we prepared a timeline of when the new provisions – including new taxes, Medicare cuts, and benefits – will go into effect. As a service to my constituents, we mailed out approximately 30,000 copies of the timeline.

This paper recently published a letter from a reader who claimed that the letter was inaccurate and partisan. I strongly disagree and I would like to clarify these concerns.

Before mailing the letter, we submitted it to the bipartisan House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards, who reviewed the letter and concluded that it was factual, accurate and nonpartisan. All information in the mail piece was confirmed by the House Committee on Ways and Means and the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, both of which played vital roles in crafting the health care bill.

This paper also published a letter from a reader who used a recent trip to the emergency room to explain his support for the bill. His bill for the visit was more than \$15,000, which was covered by Medicare. He asked for my justification for voting against the bill.

I think his story actually highlights the flaws of the new law. The key problem with health care today is the cost. For the last decade, costs have been skyrocketing at a rate that far outpaces inflation, leaving millions of Americans unable to afford the care they need. I had hoped that Congress could work together on bipartisan legislation to reduce costs and make health care more affordable. A \$15,000 emergency room bill demonstrates the need to get costs under control.

Republicans suggested reforms to expand competition and give consumers more information in order to utilize the power of the market to bring down costs. We offered ideas to curb frivolous lawsuits and reduce malpractice insurance fees. These savings would have been good steps toward making health care more affordable and accessible for all Americans.

Unfortunately, the bill's authors ignored these cost-saving suggestions. Rather than passing reforms to attack rising costs, they passed new taxes and new Medicare cuts to pay for a government takeover of a large chunk of the health care industry.

According to the Obama Administration's own chief actuary at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the new law will drive up health care spending and jeopardize access to care for many seniors. The report concludes that, "Providers for whom Medicare constitutes a substantive portion of their business could find it difficult to remain profitable and, absent legislative intervention, might end their participation in the program—possibly jeopardizing access to care for beneficiaries."

The report also concludes that, "Total national health expenditures in the United States during 2010 to 2019 would increase by about 0.9 percent. The additional demand for health services could lead to price increases, cost-shifting, and/or changes in providers' willingness to treat patients with low-reimbursement health coverage."

Put simply, the new health care law will force many doctors to stop seeing Medicare patients, leaving seniors in my district out in the cold. These are the facts: the new health care law will drive up costs and make it more difficult for many Americans, particularly seniors, to get the care they need.

These are not the kinds of reforms that my constituents wanted to see from Washington, and that is why I opposed the bill.

Rooney represents District 16 in the U.S. House of Representatives