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By Rep. Mike Coffman

Many Democrats have claimed that Republicans are being purely obstructionist with health reform and offering no real alternatives. That could not be further from the truth.

America is in desperate need of health care reforms, but the wrong reforms – or well intentioned but poorly conceived reforms will only exacerbate the current crisis. Just because my Republican colleagues and I are opposed to the current Democrat proposals, doesn't mean we're opposed to reform – despite what some Democrats may have you believe.

Unlike the current Democrat proposal, the Republican introduced alternative H.R. 3400 the Empowering Patients First Act, which I support, will improve quality of care, lower costs, and increase access to care without sending our nation spiraling trillions of dollars deeper in to debt and destroying millions of good paying jobs. The Republican alternative is composed of common sense ideas that utilize market based reforms to put health care choices squarely in the hands of patients.

Last month I called on Speaker Pelosi and Democrat leaders to lay out in exacting detail how they plan to pay for their health care reform proposal given the trillions in new debt they have already saddled American's with this year. They have still yet to do so.

As summer fades to autumn and seasons change, so too changes the rhetoric the Democrats are using to sell an ill conceived plan to the American people. The Democrats' rhetoric on health reform over the past few months framed it as an economic imperative – the system cannot sustain the current trajectory and we need reform to fix it. While that's true, the Democrats' failed to explain how their proposals would reduce the currently unsustainable costs and change that trajectory. Americans' saw through this rouse and Members of Congress heard that loud and clear throughout August.

In the last few weeks Democrats have shifted their sales tactics, reframing health care reform as “insurance reform.” Insurance reform is a key part of overall health care reform but it’s not the whole ball of wax as the Democrats new rhetoric would lead you to believe. With this new rhetoric Democrats are betting that the American people will believe that the government as the bogeyman is less ominous than health insurers as the bogeyman. Unfortunately, this new rhetoric does little to address the root of the problem with the Democrats’ current plan – its gut wrenching trillion dollar price tag.

So what reforms do Republicans stand for and what solutions have we proposed?

The Republican plan is centered on four key pillars. The first pillar is providing access to coverage for all Americans. Our plan will do this by extending tax deductions to individuals to purchase coverage. It also ensures that those with pre-existing conditions will be covered and provides a tax credit for low-income individuals who cannot afford coverage currently.

The second pillar is having patients own their coverage. The bill would grant greater choice and portability, giving patients the power to control their own coverage. It would also expand the individual market through creating new pooling mechanisms.

The third pillar of the Republican plan is improvement of the health care delivery system. The plan would institute doctor-led quality measures and reimburse physicians to ensure continuity of care. It also promotes healthier lifestyles through offering wellness and prevention discounts.

The last, and most important pillar of the Republican plan is reining in out-of-control costs. The Empowering Patients First Act would institute medical liability reforms and pay for itself entirely through savings in new efficiencies and ferreting out waste, fraud, and abuse.

As Congress reconvenes, Democrats should take a queue from their Republican colleagues and consider the alternative reforms in the Empowering Patients First Act. Our nation simply can’t afford another trillion dollars in deficit spending.

