

**Greenwood Villager**  
**August 28, 2009**

August Observations and Health Care

By Rep. Mike Coffman

So far this August I have held six town hall meetings and heard concerns from hundreds of constituents about health care reform. I have not seen any issue evoke as much emotion and passion as health care reform here in Colorado since the Vietnam War. While there have been a wide variety of voices and differing opinions on health reform, the majority of constituents I have spoken to in the Sixth District are fed up with the agenda Democrats have pursued and the correlated reckless deficit spending.

Just this week the Obama Administration revised their budget deficit prediction upward by nearly 30% to \$9 trillion dollars over the next decade. Think about that for a moment. From these new numbers one can infer an average annual deficit over 4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) for the next decade. This means our debt will be rising at a faster rate than our GDP – putting the nation on a trajectory toward fiscal insolvency. More personally, these new estimates feel like a punch in the stomach to anyone who has ever had to balance a checkbook or make tough budget decisions.

Even giving the Administration the benefit of the doubt that this was unforeseeable – that the recession has been deeper and longer and recovery more sluggish than was predictable, it is unconscionable that the President and Democrat leaders continue to support a health care reform package that adds more than a \$1 trillion to the stomach-turning national debt.

It is time Democrats 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 Americans with this year.

Unlike the current Democrat proposals, the Republican introduced alternative H.R. 3400 the Empowering Patients First Act, which I support, will not increase the federal budget deficit and is composed of common sense ideas that utilize market based reforms to put health care choices in the hands of patients.

The Republican plan is centered on four key pillars. The first pillar is providing access to coverage for all Americans. Republicans propose doing 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.

When Congress reconvenes after Labor Day, Democrats should take a cue 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.