



Duckworth, veterans in Congress criticize Trumpcare's devastating tax hike on millions of veterans

March 23 2017 4:42 PM

WASHINGTON — Today, combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee Jack Reed (D-RI), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Tim Walz (D-MN), and several others to criticize President Trump and his Republican allies in Congress for attempting to impose a tax hike on millions of Veterans' healthcare. Despite the President's campaign pledge to "ensure our Veterans get the care they need wherever and whenever they need it," a last-minute amendment made to the Republican healthcare repeal plan late Monday night would make Veterans ineligible for health care tax credits that could help them afford private health insurance.

"We already know that this President has a record of breaking his promises, but pushing a plan that makes it harder for millions of Veterans to get the health care they deserve after he promised to improve care for our Veterans is disgraceful," said Senator Duckworth. **"Either the President and House Republicans are intentionally sacrificing Veterans and putting them on a chopping block, or they wrote this bill so haphazardly that they don't know what's in it. It makes you wonder: what else don't we know about this bill?"**

This change, which was inserted through a "Manager's Amendment" to the GOP bill on Monday night, could make health care more expensive, or even out of reach, for millions of Veterans who are either ineligible for coverage in the VA Health Care system or choose not to enroll and instead purchase private health insurance with the help of tax credits. It would also remove the option Veterans currently have to choose whether they want to enroll in the VA system. The Congressional Budget Office previously estimated that approximately 8 million Veterans are eligible but not enrolled in VA and instead depend on private health insurance.

“Trumpcare would do a real disservice to our veterans and working Americans,” said Senator Jack Reed (D-RI). “Every time Republicans rewrite and revise the bill it just gets worse and worse. The underlying principle of Trumpcare is a massive tax cut for millionaires and higher costs and less coverage for everyone else. The only element of Trumpcare that seems constant is the fact it would shift a heavier financial burden onto older Americans, veterans, working families, and all fifty states. Americans deserve better.”

“In a desperate attempt to keep AHCA from failing on the House floor, Congressional Republicans introduced a poorly thought out amendment that puts millions of veterans at risk of losing access to their current healthcare or forcing them to seek care through the VA,” added Ranking Member Tim Walz. “For many veterans and their families, AHCA will leave them with no affordable insurance options. It is absolutely shameful that some in members of the House feel so strongly about passing such a substantially unvetted health bill that they would put the health of our nation’s heroes at risk. I call on Republican colleagues to immediately address this issue before moving forward with any health care related legislation.”

Also joining Duckworth, Reed and Walz today were Representatives Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), Mark Takano (D-CA), Ann McLane Kuster (D-NH), Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Anthony Brown (D-MD) and Jimmy Panetta (D-CA).

“It is irresponsible that Republicans would rob 7 Million veterans of both the options to get care through the VA system and the option to access affordable private health plans,” said Representative Gallego. “That is a disgrace. The GOP should drop this bill immediately.”

“The potential harm the American Health Care Act inflicts on veterans across the country is inexcusable. It reflects the rushed and reckless strategy for passing this bill, and it demonstrates little understanding of how America’s 22 million veterans access health care,” said Congressman Takano. “I sincerely hope my colleagues across the aisle will take the time to understand the serious consequences their bill will have for veterans and their families, who have already sacrificed so much for the country.”

“It’s unacceptable that House Republicans would jeopardize the healthcare of millions of veterans by continuing their irresponsible and shoddy late night changes to the American Health Care Act,” said Congresswoman Kuster. “It’s bad enough that this bill would already leave tens of millions of Americans without health insurance and now it’s reneging on our promise to the men and women who

have served in uniform. Making it harder for veterans to afford health insurance is un-American and nonsensical. I was proud to join Senator Duckworth and my colleagues today to denounce this misguided proposal.”

“House Republicans are so intent on recklessly forcing their healthcare bill through Congress, that they have made their repeal of healthcare for 24 million Americans even more destructive – preventing over 7 million veterans from receiving tax credits to offset healthcare costs,” said Congressman Carbajal. “It is cruel for this legislation to leave behind millions of veterans and their families who were willing to risk their lives to defend our democracy.”

"This amendment, which would strip health care from at least 7 million veterans, is a yet another example of how the quickly, carelessly crafted AHCA would hurt Americans,” said Congressman Panetta. “Through my experience with the Veterans Transition Center on the central coast of California, I saw firsthand how important it is for veterans to have a choice when it comes to the health care they receive. The AHCA takes away that choice.”

“As a nation, we must support our veterans in recovering from the harsh and sometimes traumatic experiences they undergo,” said Congressman Brown. “This means putting the full weight of a responsive mental health system at their disposal. The disastrous GOP repeal bill makes this impossible. Not only does TrumpCare strip millions of veterans of their ability to afford high-quality insurance, but it denies our service members of critical mental health, substance use, and behavioral health services. This is not only wrong but shameful. The rushed GOP repeal bill completely misses the mark and ignores the responsibility to safeguard and take care of our veterans, who have sacrificed so much to protect our nation.”

Not standing up for Veterans is far from the only campaign pledge the President has broken since taking office. During his campaign, President Trump also promised the American people that his health care plan would cover everyone and lower premiums, something the plan he’s trying to push through Congress simply does not do. A nonpartisan analysis of the first version of the President’s plan—before the provision making health care more expensive for Veterans was added—found that it would result in 24 million people losing their health insurance while working people and older Americans will face significantly higher premiums and deductibles, leaving them with more out-of-pocket costs.