

Guest column: Tell Walden to support expanded Medicare for all

by Lionel Chadwick, Sisters.

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Our congressman, Rep. Greg Walden, has told us he cares about improving Oregonians' cost of and access to health care. Yet he voted "yes" on a bad health care bill that will do neither.

The bad bill was America's Health Care Act (AHCA), recently barely passed in the U.S. House and stalled in the Senate. Although initially attractive to tax reform advocates, unfortunately the AHCA preserves the worst parts of the Affordable Care Act, dismantles the better parts, and decreases health care access for rural and hard-working Americans. To make matters worse, it will increase the federal debt and be a giveaway to insurance companies and the wealthy. That's a hard sell in this Congressional district.

Fortunately, there is a better option.

"The Expanded & Improved Medicare for All Act," HR 676, already has 108 members of Congress as co-sponsors (including three members of the Oregon delegation) — one quarter of the entire US House.

The bill is in the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the source of all health care legislation in the House and chaired by none other than Rep. Walden.

Why is HR 676 better for us?

- All Oregonians are covered: HR 676 would cover all Americans in a health care plan modeled on Medicare. Instead of investing more of our taxes in more bad coverage, this bill would direct our spending into a plan that covers all Oregon families.
- Much less bureaucracy and less cost: With this plan, no more of our hard-earned money would go to insurance companies (and their well-heeled CEOs) only to be denied care. And it would provide this coverage for less money than families spend now.
- Favors doctors and hospitals: The plan puts money where we want it — health care providers. How do we know that? Because every similar plan in the United States, both public and private, provides better care to more people for less money than the failed system of private health insurance that we must move away from.
- Better access and benefits — no hidden catches or tricks: This plan offers a straightforward approach to benefits and costs — no more unfair denials from insurance companies. Currently, American families spend on average \$4,000 per person per year on insurance premiums and out of pocket payments only to receive poor coverage, limited networks and the ever-present danger of total financial collapse if a family member gets the wrong disease at the wrong time.
- Good for small businesses and rural areas: Private insurance favors large companies and cities — this plan is also good for small employers and smaller communities. Why should small businesses be prevented from the advantages of a plan like this?
- A tried, tested and fair plan: Plans like HR 676 are widely available to many lucky citizens right now. Employees of large companies and government (including Rep. Walden himself); active military service members and their families; veterans; children; seniors; and our poorest and most vulnerable neighbors all get the benefits of a plan like this already. Why then are the rest of us unable to participate as well?

By becoming a co-sponsor of this common sense health care bill, Rep. Walden becomes a leader in fixing our broken system once and for all. He lends his name and prestige to a plan that turns our dysfunctional health care system into one that works for us.

Let Rep. Walden know we support his efforts to provide us with better health care by endorsing HR 676. Rep. Walden can show us his leadership. The time is now.