

Statement of Rep. John Kline (R-MN)
Senior Republican, Committee on Education and Labor
Rules Committee Meeting on Senate Amendments to H.R. 4872, the Health Care and
Education Reconciliation Act of 2010
March 25, 2010

Thank you Madam Chair, Ranking Member Dreier, and members of the committee. Less than a week ago, I came before this committee to declare my strong opposition to the government takeover of health care and the so-called reconciliation sidecar, which made a bad bill even worse.

As my Republican colleagues and I said over and over again last weekend, the reconciliation bill and the process by which it was forced through the House are deeply flawed. And just as we predicted, its hasty construction resulted in errors that were bound to surface. That is precisely why we are back here again today. And who is to say further glitches won't emerge down the line when it is too late to correct them?

The prudent approach today would be to slow down and give each provision in this bill due consideration.

This reconciliation bill imposes a new tax of \$2,000 per worker on businesses that cannot afford to provide government-approved health care.

Already, companies like Caterpillar and John Deere have told us their costs will increase this year by \$100 million and \$150 million, respectively, because of the government takeover of health care. And yet we want to impose even higher costs on job creators?

This reconciliation bill imposes \$20 billion worth of taxes on the sale of medical devices – costs that will be passed on to consumers directly and through their health care plans.

Just this morning, it was reported that medical manufacturers in Massachusetts are warning that they will have to close plants and lay off a thousand workers. And yet this bill maintains the \$20 billion tax hike?

This is a bill that makes it even less likely that Americans who like their current health care coverage will be able to keep it. The reconciliation bill wipes out a “grandfather” provision for employer-provided health care coverage – the health care most non-elderly Americans rely on – and makes these plans subject to some of the same new government mandates as new plans, which will only raise the costs of health coverage.

Already, Verizon has informed its 900,000 employees that their health care plans will soon be changing. And yet this bill makes it even more expensive – and more difficult – for employers to offer their workers coverage.

This is a bill that cuts even more from Medicare, relying on a funding shell game in which billions taken from our seniors are supposed to simultaneously shore up the program's

long-term finances while also funding a massive new entitlement program. In reality, this bill only worsens the long-term outlook for Medicare, Medicaid, and our nation's fiscal health.

Lastly, this is still a bill that takes \$9 billion from struggling college students and diverts it to help pay for the staggering costs of the government takeover of health care.

I oppose the government takeover of student lending because it permanently crowds out private capital and innovation, instead forcing taxpayers to finance all federal student loans directly by borrowing \$100 billion per year from China.

This bill eliminates the most popular student loan program – in the process, taking away jobs, benefits, services, competition, and choice.

To convince students and the higher education community to support this scheme, the majority promised billions in new funding for community colleges, early childhood education, school construction, and a host of other education initiatives. Yet at the end of the day, they chose to siphon \$9 billion from their takeover of the student loan industry and use it to pay for their takeover of health care.

Do not be fooled – we're not here today to debate an arcane formula technicality for the Pell grant program. We're preparing for a vote on the entire reconciliation package – complete with higher taxes, deeper Medicare cuts, more backroom deals, and a government takeover of student lending.

I opposed this bill when it passed the House just before midnight on Sunday, and I continue to oppose it today. This bill is not simply a technicality, and it deserves a full and open debate on every single provision members are being asked to approve.

We should have an open rule and a robust debate. We should not quickly and quietly force this through the House on our way to the airport. This is a consequential bill and it deserves a consequential debate. Thank you, and I yield back.