

Statement of Rep. John Kline (R-MN)
Senior Republican, Committee on Education and Labor
Rules Committee Hearing on H.R. 4872, the Reconciliation Act of 2010 and Senate
Amendments to H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
March 20, 2010

Thank you Madam Chair, Ranking Member Dreier, and members of the committee. I always appreciate the opportunity to testify before this panel, yet I say to you with absolute conviction I wish we were not here on this day and under these circumstances.

By now, the objections of my party and the American people to the underlying bill are well known. From the tax increases and Medicare cuts to the new mandates and federal intrusion, we all understand why the common shorthand for what's at stake is to call this a government takeover of health care.

With only a few precious hours remaining before the final vote, I believe my time is best spent today talking about what the American people don't already know – and unfortunately, there is plenty.

In fact, it was the Speaker of the House who recently told an audience of local officials “we have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it.”

Respectfully, I beg to differ. The American people deserve to know what's at stake long before legislation reaches the President's desk.

Take for example the proposal to eliminate the largest single federal financial aid program, a public-private partnership used to finance and service millions of students' college loans each year. Most Americans would never have predicted such a proposal was on the table – much less that it would be included in a bill aimed at reshaping our health care system.

This bill would force every college student in America into a one-size-fits-all program and transform the U.S. Department of Education into one of our nation's largest banks. It takes a temporary problem – the need for increased federal financing of student loans in the face of a global credit crisis – and makes it permanent federal policy.

This would put taxpayers on the hook for at least \$100 billion per year in direct government lending – and likely much more, as college costs continue to rise. That means conservatively speaking, the U.S. government will take on an additional trillion dollars in long-term debt over the next decade – debt we will owe to China and our other foreign creditors at a time when U.S. debts and deficits are already far too high.

Students and schools were promised tens of billions of dollars if they were willing to swallow this plan to eliminate a popular financial aid program. Instead, CBO tells us \$9 billion of the \$61 billion created by eliminating the student loan program would be siphoned from Democrats' promises of deficit reduction and education spending – in other words, Democrats are using the student loan program as a slush fund to pay for their unpopular health care plans.

This appears to be a classic bait and switch, with students and schools forced to sacrifice a popular program and getting far less than they bargained for in return. And it's not the only rude awakening for taxpayers. The bill posted to the Rules Committee website 48 hours ago includes another shady backroom deal modeled on the Cornhusker Kickback and the Louisiana Purchase. This time, the Bank of North Dakota would remain in the more popular student loan program, even as it is abolished for every other student, school, and state in the nation. Call it the Bismarck Bank Job.

Media reports indicate the Senator who secured this sweetheart deal has decided at the eleventh hour the bad publicity is not worth the cozy benefit for his state. But we still have not seen a manager's amendment to strike this outrageous carve-out.

A government takeover of our health care system would be bad enough. Add to it a government takeover of student lending and we quickly realize this legislation is not about doing what's right for American families – it's about expanding the size, scope, and power of the federal government at all costs.