

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

The Optimist's Guide to Repeal and Replace *Patient-Centered Health-Care Reform for the 21st-Century*

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Remarks As Prepared For Delivery

Thank you very much for that introduction. It was kind of you to invite me – and not hold it against me that I steal so many ideas from you guys.

It's true. I steal monetary policy ideas from John Taylor, rule-of-law stuff from Richard Epstein. I even tried to steal some wit and humor from Peter Robinson during a taping of his show this morning, but I'm not sure that worked.

If this speech falls flat – blame Robinson.

I'm here today to talk about health care, which is a subject that I find it hard to be funny about – especially since the Democrats stole all the health care jokes and enacted them into law.

Unfortunately, the consequences of this law are no joke. The first step toward true, patient-centered health care reform must be a full repeal of the President's disastrous new law.

If we engage the nation in a serious debate, and put forward a principled reform agenda, then I think the odds are good that the Republican party will soon find itself with the opportunity to do just that.

But we cannot stop at repeal. We also have a responsibility to fix the broken network of government policies that have made such a mess of health care in America.

If that is a prospect that excites you, it should. We have the right ideas on health care, and a change of power in Washington would bring with it an opportunity to turn these ideas into good public policy.

But if that prospect worries you, well, I can understand why. The political hurdles that stand in the way of real, structural health-care reform are daunting. And while Republicans have advanced many good ideas on health care, it is my candid opinion that the party as a whole has yet to coalesce around a complete reform agenda aimed at dealing with the underlying problem – which is runaway inflation in the cost of health care.

Today, I will attempt to make the case for optimism. Specifically, I come bearing three pieces of good news.

The first piece of good news is this: The urgent need to repeal and replace the President's health-care law, coupled with the urgent need to deal with the drivers of our debt, will present us with an unavoidable time for choosing, allowing us to confront health-care inflation head-on.

The second piece of good news is this: Thanks to the tireless work of health-policy scholars here at Hoover and elsewhere, we know what works and what doesn't. Simply put, badly designed government policies are to blame for much of what is wrong with health care today, and the solution is clear: We need to transition from the open-ended, defined-benefit approach of the past, to market-oriented, defined-contribution reforms that promote choice and competition.

And the third piece of good news is this: Though the political hurdles are high, we know we can win these fights – within the conservative movement, across party lines, and across the nation. The challenge will be to summon the courage and the ability to offer Americans a true choice of two futures on health care, which is a choice they deserve.

Let's take each of these reasons for optimism in order.

An Opportunity for Reform