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Today, Republican Members of Congress who ran on a platform of repealing health care and patients' rights for millions of Americans officially began receiving their own Congressional health insurance. Just two weeks after their party [voted unanimously](#) to strip patient protections and affordable coverage for all Americans,

[all but 15](#)

new Republican members of the 112th Congress are enrolled in a comprehensive insurance plan. Their plan is paid for with generous subsidies courtesy of the American taxpayer, and has no waiting period for pre-existing illness or disability.

Beginning today, a new Republican Member of Congress with high blood pressure, diabetes, or any chronic condition is immediately covered at the same premium cost as 8 million other federal employees. The same is true for his or her spouse and dependent children, regardless of age, gender or prior illness.

That would not be the case for millions of Americans if the GOP health care repeal bill becomes law. For [129 million](#) men and women under the age of 65 who have pre-existing conditions, repeal of the Affordable Care Act would spell the end of protection from price and coverage discrimination that newly-covered Republican Members of Congress now enjoy.

If the Republican repeal bill were to become law, [1.2 million](#) young Americans between ages 22 and 26 who just became eligible to stay on their parents' insurance plans will be cut loose again and sent back to the ranks of the uninsured.

But my new Republican colleagues would keep theirs.

If the Republican repeal bill were to become law, patients with costly chronic conditions like, cancer, hemophilia and ALS would again be subject to lifetime and yearly limits on coverage. Millions of Americans struck by catastrophic illness or injury would again find themselves exposed to loss of home or bankruptcy. For our family, friends and neighbors, peace of mind would be gone.

But again, my new Republican colleagues would keep theirs.

If the GOP repeal bill were to become law, [4 million](#) small business owners would see their 2010 taxes increase by thousands of dollars each year. The Affordable Care Act included tax credits starting this year to provide [relief](#) to small employers who pay much higher premiums than large firms.

Despite the blatant cost increase repeal would force on job-creating small businesses across the country, my new Republican colleagues themselves would not pay a penny more.

When I first ran for Congress in 2006, I promised the voters in my district that I would not take the Congressional health insurance plan until all Americans have access to the same coverage and protections as Members of Congress. My wife and I have kept that pledge even though our benefits cost more and provide less choice than the federal plan.

When the Affordable Care Act is fully implemented, there will be parity between elected officials and their constituents - all Americans will have the same coverage protections as the men and women they send to Washington. Indeed the Act requires Members and their staff to obtain coverage through the Act's purchasing exchange when it goes online in 2014.

For Republicans vehemently opposed to health care reform, taking generous taxpayer-funded insurance benefits just days after voting to strip protections from their constituents is

outrageous. Not only did they vote to deny benefits to the people they represent, but they also voted unanimously to keep the details of their health benefits exempt from Freedom of Information laws - effectively blocking their constituents from knowing whether they accepted taxpayer-funded benefits. The hypocrisy is breathtaking.

No one begrudges principled opposition to enacted laws, and even the strongest proponents of health care reform would concede that the legislation we passed was not perfect. However, as former-Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) publicly [stated](#) , repeal was not a serious way to address the bill's flaws.

Of course, if my new Republican colleagues were serious about repealing the Affordable Care Act and not just scoring political points, they would do what they are asking of millions of Americans by purchasing insurance on the open market and forfeiting their taxpayer-funded coverage.

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