

All eyes last week were on the United States Supreme Court, as the nine justices heard oral arguments on the constitutionality of President Obama's health care overhaul. This is a significant case in the long history of the Supreme Court, and the ruling by the justices will certainly have effects that echo far into this country's future. What isn't under debate on either side, however, is the fact that our nation's health care system is in urgent need of reform. Costs are too high. The costs of receiving and providing health care continue to rise, in the First Congressional District and all across America. I continue to hear from both patients and doctors about the impact that bad policies and inefficient regulations are having on the cost of providing care.

Health care policy is something that affects us all. It is so important that any reforms coming from Washington must focus on the factors that make health care so expensive. It is also essential that we keep in mind the unique health needs of individuals, families, seniors, and employers in targeting the rising cost of coverage. I believe that important health care decisions should be made by patients and doctors, not insurance companies or government bureaucrats. Policy that allows government to interfere in the patient-doctor relationship, while also continuing the increases in health care costs, is simply bad policy. This is why I voted against the health care overhaul in 2010 and have voted on multiple occasions since then to repeal it. However, I am also committed to working on common-sense solutions to ensure coverage for individuals with preexisting conditions, allow youth up to the age of 26 to stay on their parents' insurance plans, allow the sale of insurance across state lines, and reduce the overall cost of delivering health-care, among other realistic reforms. Also important is the focus that decisions on care remain personal – between patients and doctors.

On March 22, I was proud to vote for H.R. 5, the Protecting Access to Healthcare (PATH) Act, which repeals a part of the President's health care overhaul that would put a board of 15 unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats in charge of reducing Medicare costs. This board, called the Independent Payment Advisory Board, could issue proposals that would drastically affect the relationship between seniors and their doctors. The PATH Act passed with bipartisan support, and I believe that there are many other areas in which folks can agree on how to address rising health care costs and pursue responsible health care reform.

As the Supreme Court deliberates over the constitutionality of the health care overhaul, please keep in touch with me about your own personal experiences dealing with our nation's health care system. Your thoughts and opinions on the best ways to address health care reform are very helpful to me. As always, I can be reached through email on my website (www.wittman.house.gov), by phone (202-225-4261), through Twitter (

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) and via Facebook (

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Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

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