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Article published Oct 21, 2010

Donnelly can't represent this area's economic interests

By NELSON O'REAR

I have personally contacted the office of U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly, D-Granger, several times in the last few years on different subjects. His office's responses rarely showed interest in my suggestions. A specific example was the health care bill. I contacted his office, advising him to oppose it because we cannot afford it. He voted for that bill, claiming that it would actually save taxpayers money — contrary to most unbiased analyses then and afterward.

The Cato Institute (a Libertarian think tank in Washington, D.C.) in July published a study of that law. Part of the study's conclusion states:

"Health care reform was designed to accomplish three goals: (1 provide health insurance coverage for all Americans, (2 reduce insurance costs for individuals, businesses, and government, and (3 increase the quality of health care and the value received for each dollar of health care spending. Judged by these goals, the new law should be considered a colossal failure. The president and the law's supporters in Congress also promised that the legislation would not increase the federal budget deficit or unduly burden the economy. And, of course, we were repeatedly promised that 'If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period. No one will take it away, no matter what.' "

An Oct. 11 report in the Dayton Daily News said some individuals are now paying higher premiums for their health insurance, due to this law, and some companies are considering dropping health insurance for their employees because of this law.

The Cato Institute study also found that this law will add more than \$352 billion to our national debt within the next 10 years, even after Congress removed from the bill and passed separately the government payments to doctors for Medicare, billions of dollars more that they excluded from their health care law costs to make it appear affordable.

Our national debt is now growing so fast that it may threaten our nation's economy. Donnelly chose to ignore that.

In March 2010, the Bank for International Settlements said that our gross debt will grow from 62 percent of Gross Domestic Product, the value of our entire economy's annual output, in 2007, the year Democrats gained control of Congress, to 100 percent of GDP in 2011. Our gross debt will have increased 61 percent in only those four years! Compare the same gross debt as a percentage of GDP for Greece, currently experiencing serious economic problems: 104 percent in 2007 to 130 percent in 2011, increasing 25 percent those four years. Although other factors are also relevant, gross debt as a percentage of GDP is a key factor in determining our economy's health and continued viability, according to some members of the President's Fiscal Reform Commission.

Adding to our national debt should concern us all. Donnelly and his fellow congressional Democrats, instead of addressing this issue, chose to stack the deck with the Congressional Budget Office when

assessing health care bill costs by giving them ground rules to use that assured Democrats would receive the answer that it would not add to our national debt. The Cato Institute and others were not bound by those unrealistic ground rules. Instead, they used real-world rules and exposed the Democrats' financial chicanery. Many understood this would be the result of removing those unrealistic study restrictions, even before the bill was passed.

Donnelly touts that he is a Blue Dog Democrat, which supposedly means that he is a fiscal conservative; however, the Wall Street Journal recently pointed out that Blue Dog Democrats have aligned with the votes of Speaker Nancy Pelosi 80 percent of the time on economic issues. The article went on to say:

“Every one of them voted for the bailout of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Sixty-three percent voted for the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program; 91 percent voted for the stimulus package in February 2009; 85 percent voted for the cash-for-clunkers program; 74 percent voted for President Obama's debt-tripling 2010 budget; 73 percent voted for the auto bailout; and 54 percent voted for the federal takeover of health care. The evidence is overwhelming: The Blue Dogs are not fiscal conservatives, and only a few can credibly claim even to be fiscal moderates.”

Opinion columnist John Merline in AOLNews, citing the Congressional Budget Office as his source, said:

“Between 2011 and 2018, Obama would spend \$4.9 trillion more than Bush had planned ... all this extra spending is after the economic stimulus has been almost entirely exhausted.”

Can we afford to add another 37 percent to our national debt by 2018? Considering Greece's economic problems, adding another \$4.9 trillion to our gross debt, currently about \$13 trillion, has the potential of causing great economic harm. Donnelly's record of voting with other Democrats indicates that he would likely support that additional spending. (Note that this Congress, with Democrats' overwhelming majority in the House, irresponsibly chose not to pass a budget for this fiscal year, which is required annually by Sept. 30. Thus, they conveniently avoided informing voters of their spending plans this fiscal year.) We should not saddle our children and grandchildren with such financial burdens, sacrificing their economic futures.

Donnelly helped pass the laws that are currently hindering our economic recovery. He is the wrong person to represent those concerned about our economy, its anemic recovery from the current recession, and lack of jobs.

Sending the same person back to Congress and expecting a different result is unrealistic. It's time for change.

Nelson O'Rear is a Granger resident.
