



Whatever Supreme Court decides, healthcare must be revisited

By Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.) - 06/20/12 01:35 PM ET

More than two years ago, Democrats in Congress passed the president's healthcare law on a partisan basis. Later this month, the Supreme Court is expected to announce its decision on the constitutionality of the healthcare law. It is my hope that the Supreme Court will rule in favor of patients over big government by striking down the law.

The president's healthcare law went too far because it gives the federal government unlimited power over patients' healthcare decisions. The individual mandate is unconstitutional because the federal government is literally forcing all Americans to buy health insurance. If the government is able to force individuals to purchase health care, what else will they require the American people to purchase?

Compromising patients' rights even more, the healthcare law gives the federal government the right to decide what is "acceptable" coverage for individuals and it will tax those who fall short of a standard set by Washington bureaucrats. Those who do not meet the standard will be taxed or penalized.

The individual mandate is not the only dangerous provision in the healthcare law. As the author of legislation to repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB), I have been leading the fight to block the president's attempt to ration care through this dangerous board.

The IPAB, comprised of a board of 15 unelected bureaucrats, is in charge of making cuts to Medicare to meet a budget. Even worse, Congress will have no oversight and limited ability to reverse recommendations by the board before it goes into effect. This will result in seniors being denied access to the medical care they need, and it will also put the government in between patients and their doctors.

According to a health policy study at the Cato Institute, IPAB has the power to raise taxes, spend money, place conditions on federal grants to states, and exercise other powers the Constitution reserves solely to Congress. If the Supreme Court upholds the healthcare law, which created the IPAB, there is concern that states could soon see the board imposing similar mandates on states. There is also bipartisan concern that the cuts the IPAB implements could lead to fewer medical providers accepting Medicare benefits and limit access to care for seniors.

When the Supreme Court has made its ruling, Congress will need to start fixing the mess that was made in 2010 when the healthcare law was passed by Democrats on a partisan basis. I am committed to working to repeal the law and addressing critical healthcare challenges that face our nation. I urge the Obama Administration and Democrats in Congress to work with Republicans in passing reforms that keep patients and their physicians in charge of their medical decisions. We need to ensure affordability while increasing accessibility in order to maximize the healthcare choices for patients.

Regardless of political party, our common goals should be to improve access and care to patients, not expand the powers of the federal government and cut care to our seniors through the powerful IPAB. We need to repeal the healthcare law in its entirety before it affects the care of patients and seniors.