

Bilirakis Sends Health Care Reform Warning

Tampa Bay Business Journal | Bilirakis Sends Health Care Reform Warning
Bilirakis: Health care reform could increase unemployment

U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Palm Harbor, is using the most recent high unemployment rates in Florida to blast a proposed health care plan that has the support of Democrats in Congress.

“At a time when Floridians are facing double-digit unemployment for the first time in decades, Congress should not be pushing through a government takeover of health care that will be paid for by a tax hike on small businesses,” Bilirakis, who has been in Congress since 2007, said in a statement. “Simply put, the proposed plan places a stifling new tax of up to 5.4 percent on small businesses. In a recession nearing double-digit unemployment nationally, this misguided health care experiment will discourage job growth and creation, leading to even higher unemployment.”

The health care plan, which would insure nearly 95 percent of the nation, could cost more than \$1 trillion over 10 years, according to published reports. Supporters of the measure have suggested cutting other items off the budget as well as a \$540 billion increase in taxes to the top 2 percent of wage earners — those making at least \$280,000 a year individually or \$350,000 for families — to fund it.

“While I agree that we need to take action to make health care more affordable for all Americans, I don’t believe that we should replace our current system entirely and put the government in control of the nation’s health care,” Bilirakis said. “Instead, we should embark on responsible reform that addresses the shortcomings of the current system while bringing health care costs under control.”

President Obama has pushed Congress to pass health care reform before the summer is over.

“We can’t kick the can down the road any longer,” Obama said during a speech Wednesday. “Deferring reform is nothing more than defending the status quo — and those who would oppose our efforts should take a hard look at just what it is that they’re defending.”

Over the last decade, health insurance premiums have risen three times faster than wages, Obama said. “And every single day we wait to act, thousands of Americans lose their insurance, some turning to nurses in emergency rooms as their only recourse,” he said, according to a transcript released by the White House.

Bilirakis said the proper way to bring health care costs under control is to encourage preventative care and pass “meaningful medical liability reform” that would help stop costs from skyrocketing. “In addition, we can strengthen associated health care plans to allow more groups to pool risk so they can join together and provide affordable health coverage while increasing transparency in pricing so people can more accurately comparison shop,” he said.