COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS
CHAIRMAN DAVE CAMP

Floor Statement

Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI)
H.R. 5, the Protecting Access to Health Care Act
March 21, 2012

(Remarks as Prepared)

Mr. Speaker, today I come to the floor to speak in support of H.R. 5, the Protecting Access to Health Care Act (PATH), which, among other things, will repeal yet another poorly designed provision from the Democrats' health care law.

Specifically, this legislation would repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board. IPAB, as it is commonly known, is a dangerous new government agency made up of unelected bureaucrats who can meet in total secrecy to decide what seniors will pay and what health care services will be available to seniors. This unaccountable board has but one objective – to save money by restricting access to health care for Medicare beneficiaries.

Nearly two years since its passage, the Democrats' health care law remains deeply unpopular, with an Associated Press poll recently revealing that nearly half of the American people oppose the law. IPAB, which is a critical component of the law, illustrates why those concerns are still so strong. A separate poll confirms that opposition far outweighs support with:

- Seventy-three percent expressed concern that Medicare cuts recommended by IPAB could go into effect without Congressional approval, even if IPAB's recommendations overturn a law previously passed by Congress;
- Seventy-one percent expressed concern that changes made to Medicare based on IPAB's recommendations cannot be challenged in court; and
- Sixty-seven percent worry that IPAB could choose to limit which specific health services are covered by Medicare.

The American people have every reason to be worried. We should be protecting and empowering our seniors, not jeopardizing their access to health care. Yet IPAB removes seniors, physicians and families from the decision-making process about how to best meet their health care needs. Instead of giving seniors more choices, these unelected bureaucrats will take away choices from patients, doctors and families.

This "government knows best" approach is why Americans across the country support repeal – and it is also why there is strong bipartisan support here in Congress to repeal IPAB.
When the Ways and Means Committee considered this legislation, we received numerous letters from groups across the nation representing employers, patients, doctors and health care professionals who voiced strong support for IPAB repeal.

The groups span across the political spectrum and include Easter Seals, the Alliance of Specialty Medicine, the Veterans Health Council, Freedomworks and Americans for Tax Reform. In total, over 390 groups have signed letters asking that Congress repeal IPAB and I ask unanimous consent that these letters be submitted into the record.

America's seniors deserve better. Without reform, the Medicare Trustees have said that Medicare will soon go broke and not be able to provide the benefits seniors rely on. With more and more Americans becoming eligible for Medicare each day, no time is more urgent than now to secure the future of beneficiaries' access to care. IPAB does just the opposite – it threatens seniors' access to health care – and that is why it must be repealed.

Mr. Speaker, the Democrats got it right when they named the IPAB. It truly is the "independent" payment advisory board. It is independent from seniors, independent from people with disabilities, independent from voters, independent from legal challenges and appeals, and independent from any accountability.

It is time to give that independence back to patients, doctors, and to Congress by voting to repeal this Washington power grab. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting repeal of the Independent Payment Advisory Board and vote yes on this legislation.

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