

Congressman Mike Pence appeared on *MSNBC* with Andrea Mitchell to discuss health care reform, the President's upcoming speech to a joint session of Congress and the President's speech to schoolchildren today:

Transcript:

MSNBC Host Andrea Mitchell: Republican Congressman Mike Pence from Indiana is Chairman of the House Republican Conference. Good to see you, Mr. Chairman. Let's talk about health care. What can the president say tomorrow that will persuade any House Republicans that they should join in a bipartisan effort?

Rep. Mike Pence: Well, I think it's important to state emphatically that after a tumultuous five weeks of August town hall meetings by Republicans and Democrats across the country, that the American people don't want another speech on health care, they want another plan on health care. And I think the challenge the president has tomorrow night, not only among Members of Congress but among the American people, is to demonstrate that he's been listening to the American people who don't want a government takeover, they don't want \$800 billion in higher taxes, but they do want health care reform that will lower the cost of health insurance and lower the cost of health care for Americans in the future.

Mitchell: Well, let's listen to what the president had to say at the Labor Day AFL-CIO event yesterday, because he's putting it right back on you Republicans. Let's watch.

(Begin Video Clip)

President Obama: I have a question for all these folks who say we're going to pull the plug on grandma and this is all about illegal immigrants. You've heard all the lies. I've got a question for all those folks. What are you going to do? What's your answer? What's your solution? And you know what? They don't have one.

(End Video Clip)

Mitchell: Does he make a fair point? I mean, you're talking about a government takeover. He's talking about a public option being on one part of the overall solution. That hardly sounds like a government takeover.

Rep. Pence: Well let me address the president. What the president actually said there was that Republicans, and apparently every American who opposes a government run insurance plan, have no solutions. And you know, the Administration knows that's just factually untrue. Republicans have a broad range of proposals, including a number of individual bills in the House and the Senate that would address issues like allowing Americans to buy health insurance across state lines. It would address medical malpractice reform, portability, and preexisting conditions. Yesterday's speech was certainly not a helpful precursor to an outreach by the president to Republicans in the House and Senate.

But look, you know, the speeches on the stump notwithstanding, if the president will confront his own party and say, look, the American people don't want a government-run insurance plan that is going to cost tens of millions of Americans to lose the health insurance that they have today, as their employers cancel their health insurance and send them to the new government plan, if the president will tell his own party the American people don't want the public option and take that off the table, then I think there's an awful lot we can get done going forward. Hot speeches on labor day notwithstanding.

Mitchell: And speaking of hot speeches, the speech that was given to the schools today endorsed by Newt Gingrich after he read it, First Lady Laura Bush and others, do you think that people were too quick to jump on the president?

Rep. Pence: Well look, I think it was a teachable moment for this Administration. Clearly, the Department of Education erred in their overly aggressive lesson plans. I think the question that was alarming to many Americans was the one that invited students until they changed it, invited students to write about how they could help the president. Look, I'm in a classroom in my Congressional district every two weeks, Andrea. I think it's important for men and women in public life at every level to speak to our children about civics and about their own responsibility and about the importance of education.

I commend the president for his speech today. I didn't hear all of it, but I understand it was a wonderful and inspiring speech for the kids. I suspect the Administration has learned its lesson not to go too far and be too aggressive on these lesson plans and precursor, just let the president talk to our kids about education and the future, and that's what he did today.

Mitchell: Alright, back to school for everybody. Thank you so much, Mike Pence.

Rep. Pence: Thank you, Andrea.