

Congressman Mike Pence appeared on the *FOX News* program "On The Record" with Greta Van Susteren to discuss the House Republican health care alternative:



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FOX NEWS

GRETA VAN SUSTEREN, FOX NEWS HOST: The GOP has hammered the House Democrats' health care bill, and critics have fired back at Republicans, Oh, yes? Do you have a better idea? Well, today House Republicans say they do. They officially released the Republican health care reform bill. So what's it all about?

Republican congressman Mike Pence joins us. Good evening, sir.

REP. MIKE PENCE, R - IND.: Good evening, Greta.

VAN SUSTEREN: So what is the Republican health care reform bill, and how is it different than what the Democrats are proposing?

PENCE: Well, the Democrat bill, all 1,990 pages of it, with hundreds of billions of dollars in taxes and mandates and bureaucracy, is really, we believe, a government takeover of health care that's driving toward their goal of what they call universal coverage.

Republicans believe we've listened to the American people and heard that the real concern among the American people is the cost of health insurance. And so the bill that's on line today -- there's a one-sheet version of it, or you can read all 219 pages, Greta. What we do is we allow people to purchase health insurance across state lines. We allow groups of employers to purchase health insurance on a nationwide basis, the way the big corporations can. We pass medical malpractice reform to lower the cost of health care, end defensive medicine and junk lawsuits. And then we use those savings to strengthen those insurance funds at the state level that will cover preexisting conditions for Americans. And so our bill is intended to lower the cost of health insurance, rather than growing the size of government, and we think it's going to resonate with millions of Americans.

VAN SUSTEREN: All right, let me start first with the medical malpractice reform. In your particular bill, are you likewise limiting the legal fees on both the plaintiffs' lawyers and the defense lawyers? Because I don't think there's any possible way that you can have true reform unless you put the lid on both. Typically, there's only a lid put on one side. Do you put it on both sides?

PENCE: Well, we're talking in the bill -- you can look at the details with your extensive legal background. We're talking in the bill about capping punitive damages. When you look at these massive jury awards in medical malpractice cases, the hundreds of millions of dollars in punitive damages, that's what's driving up people's health insurance premiums. And the doctors I talk to back in Indiana tell me that it's -- it's essentially the fear of litigation that causes many doctors to prescribe, you know, more tests and more treatments than they believe are absolutely necessary. It's called "defensive medicine."

So yes, we're advocating those kind of caps, Greta, but it's all, we believe, a part of a long-term strategy to lower the cost of health care, lower the cost of health insurance, and again, use those savings to cover preexisting conditions in the state funds that exist today.

VAN SUSTEREN: All right, my guess is, though, the punitive damages -- that scares doctors and they may do defensive medicine as a result, but that in reality, that punitive damages are rarely awarded, that the bigger problem is -- in some ways, is that the inability of the two sides to really look at a problem and see if it should be resolved -- and I really think that if you do any reform, you got to put the cap on lawyers for sides so you make them sit down and evaluate fairly and stop scaring the doctors.

PENCE: Well, you know, it's a terrific point, and it's one of the deficiencies of the Pelosi health care bill, Greta, is that they actually make reference to medical malpractice reform. They create some state grants. But then they rule out states like Indiana or California that already have caps in medical malpractice cases. I mean, really -- it really works a hardship on states that have tried to bring about reasonable litigation reform in the area of the practice of medicine. And so they just talk a little about it. They nod at it.

One of the centerpieces of the Republican alternative, which you can read all about it, Healthcare.gov.gov, is medical malpractice reform, along with letting people purchase insurance all across this country.

VAN SUSTEREN: All right, what's your cost? And will this -- and how many more Americans do you anticipate being covered by your Republican proposal?

PENCE: Well, as I stand here with you right now, I'm not sure the CBO cost is yet out, but we'll be talking about that. I think it's going to be a very pleasant surprise for Americans that are troubled about this \$1.3 trillion government takeover that Democrats are moving through the House. I think the CBO number is going to be rather impressive. And I won't preempt that. I'll let the Congressional Budget Office describe that for you. But your second question was, again?

VAN SUSTEREN: How many people do you expect to be covered, how many more people, with your...

PENCE: Right. Right. Thank you for that. You know, Democrats are trying to get at this business of universal coverage through mandates, through bureaucracies, through taxing people that don't purchase health insurance and creating a new government-run insurance plan. We believe you get at the coverage issue by lowering the cost of health insurance. I don't know too many small business owners back in Indiana that don't want to offer health insurance for their employees. They just can't afford it.

So Republicans, by focusing on the cost of health insurance, believe that we are going to take our country in the direction where -- where we also deal with the tens of millions of people that --

that -- and employers that struggle with providing insurance.

VAN SUSTEREN: All right, here's a novel idea. Have you marched your bill up to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to have her take a look at it? She may see things that she finds appealing, or you might find some of her ideas appealing. Can that be done? Can you -- can you talk a little bit between the two sides?

PENCE: You know, members of Congress, despite what it looks like on television, actually talk across the aisle all the time. And I believe it would be possible for us to move in the direction of the kind of health care reform that Republicans are talking about. I think Senator Ron Wyden over here on the Senate side actually has a bill that allows people to purchase health insurance across state lines.

But it's all going to have to begin with stopping this freight train of big government that is the Pelosi health care bill. We've got to stop this bill in its tracks. Then I think this conversations can begin, and we can begin to work together in a way that, on an incremental basis, pursues the kind of reforms that'll really lower the cost of health insurance for the American people without permanently growing the size of government.

VAN SUSTEREN: Congressman, thank you, sir.