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WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Congressman Mike Pence gave the following statement today on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives shortly before the vote on the Democrat health care bill:

"After months of overwhelming public opposition to a government takeover of health care, liberal Democrats are choosing to ignore the clear voice of the American people in bringing forth this freight train of runaway spending, bloated bureaucracy, mandates and higher taxes.

"Even a few courageous Democrats have been willing to speak out. In opposing the bill, my distinguished Democrat colleague, Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Ike Skelton, a man who knew President Truman, said he opposed the bill because he had 'serious concerns...for Missourians who have private insurance plans they like.' And my Democrat colleague Dan Boren of Oklahoma said, 'The worst thing we could do in a recession is raise taxes and this bill does just that.'

"As these Democrat colleagues attest: If the Democrat health care bill passes today, you'll probably lose your health insurance and you might just lose your job.

"The Democrat health care plan targets us when we are most vulnerable. Illness, our own, or more importantly the illness of a parent, or a spouse, or a child, has the capacity to suspend our priorities. What was important before the crisis grows dim in the harsh light of disease affecting a loved one. The result: little by little, in the midst of family crises, we yield our freedoms and our resources to the ever-growing appetite of the federal government.

"But if liberal Democrats think this is what our nation wants, they don't know the America I know.

"Mike Schwaller is my cousin. He is an extraordinary young man who has been struggling with cancer but has maintained his faith and courage, inspiring us all.

"Mike wrote me an email the other day and gave me permission to share it. As a cancer patient with limited treatment options, he's awaiting insurance approval for an experimental treatment because his system can no longer tolerate the long regimen of chemo. He seems like just the kind of American that my Democrat colleagues keep telling us want government-run insurance.

"But they don't know Mike.

"As he wrote about his coverage saying: '....if this was a government bureaucracy, I have no faith that it would be processed in a timely manner and even then, if it would be approved. The idea of a public health care option, as a chronic cancer patient, scares the living hell out of me. I feel that at this very moment in time you are fighting for me, and my life on a very personal level. Please, please don't give up or give in.'

"Michael, I promise you we won't and you don't give up either.

"Truth is, this debate is not just about health care, it's about who we are as a nation.

"As President Reagan said, it's about 'whether we abandon the American revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far distant Capitol can plan our lives better than we can plan them ourselves.'

"Earlier today, I greeted about 50 Hoosiers, mostly in wheelchairs, unit caps and uniforms, at the World War II Memorial. These heroes were gathered for their first, and maybe only, visit to the monument built in their honor.

"As I made my way back to the Capitol, I thought about those brave men and what sustained them in those days when the very survival of democracy hung in the balance. I believe it was because they were fighting for a cause more important than their happiness, their health and even their life, and that cause was freedom.

"In the coming hours we will take a vote of incalculable significance to the lives of every American and we will see what our so-called 'Blue Dog' Democrat colleagues are made of.

"We will see whether Democrats who profess to believe in limited government will take a stand for freedom or whether they will fold under the weight of the Democratic majority and the White House.

"I know it's no easy thing to oppose your president and your party on a major piece of legislation. But let me assure my colleagues, decent Americans all, that if you will take this stand for freedom, I believe it with all my heart that you will know for the rest of your lives just what those men in wheelchairs have known every day since they came home: That when freedom hung in the balance, the right to live and work and care for a family free of unnecessary government intrusion, you did freedom's work. And the American people will never forget it."