

By Rep. Steve King

President Obama's September 9 address before a joint session of Congress may have been his last chance to salvage his health care plan. Listening to Obama's speech that night reminded me of the end of a famous poem, Casey at the Bat, about a baseball slugger who strikes out with the game on the line.

*Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;  
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,  
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;  
But there is no joy in Mudville - mighty Casey has struck out.*

In the poem, the Mudville baseball team is losing 4-2 with two outs and two runners on in the last inning. Casey's at bat is the team's last chance to win the game, and he valiantly strides to the plate, doffing his hat as he settles in to hit. But Casey's overconfidence foolishly leads him to not swing at strike one or two, leaving just one pitch to swing at. When that pitch comes, "the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow," but he misses the ball and strikes out.

In the poem, the Mudville players and fans place their complete confidence in Casey, which is exactly what liberals on Capitol Hill have done with President Obama. They believed a major address from President Obama could save their health care bill. The President gave another well-delivered speech but a closer examination of the language he used reveals a number of ambiguities and essentially the same policies a majority of Americans reject.

And just as Casey ignored the first two strikes that came past him, liberals spent August in denial about their plan. They dismissed the large number of Americans who expressed their frustration at town hall meetings across the country and through phone calls and emails. Opinion polls indicated growing opposition to the liberal plan, but Democrats refused to make major changes to their plan or listen to Republican ideas.

They also continue to make claims to support their plan that simply are not true. Liberals claim that illegal immigrants cannot receive health benefits under their bill. Yet none of their health care bills contain verification mechanisms, such as proof of citizenship requirements, to ensure that illegal immigrants do not receive benefits. And Democrats in two congressional committees defeated Republican amendments introduced to close this loophole.

Another dubious claim made by liberals is that we have a health care crisis in America. According to a Senate Republican Conference report, if you take the number of uninsured Americans (47 million) and subtract from that number those eligible, but not enrolled, for a government benefit like Medicaid (9.7 million), those that are eligible but choose not to enroll in employer sponsored coverage (6 million), those making over \$75,000 a year who choose not to buy coverage (9.0 million), illegal immigrants (5.2 million) and legal immigrants subject to the five year bar (5.0 million), the number of uninsured Americans without affordable options drops to 12.1 million. The real number of chronically uninsured is less than 4% of our population, hardly a crisis.

To dismantle the best system in the world just to reduce that 4% is an act of treachery against American freedom. Instead, we need real solutions like lawsuit abuse reform, the ability to purchase health insurance across state lines and full deductibility that provides consumers with lower costs and more choices.

The audacity of President Obama's speech will long be remembered, but he is determined to pass the same bad plan, one that more and more Americans are rejecting each day. In politics, the umpire is the voice of the American people. That is why there is no joy in Liberalville – their mighty Casey has struck out.