



Gordon Watts <gww1210@gmail.com>

From the Desk of Congressman Dennis Ross

1 message

Congressman Dennis Ross <Dennis.Ross@mail.house.gov> Wed, Oct 9, 2013 at 10:25 AM
To: "Mr. Gordon W. Watts" <gww1210@gmail.com>

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October 9, 2013

Mr. Gordon W. Watts
821 Alicia Rd
Lakeland, FL 33801-2113

Dear Mr. Watts:

Thank you for contacting me regarding Members of Congress health coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). I appreciate that you took the time to share your concerns with me on this matter, and welcome the opportunity to respond.

For decades, the federal government has offered a selection of health insurance plans to Members of Congress and staff, which are nearly identical to the health insurance options available to private-sector employees across the country. However, my staff and I along with our colleagues in Congress, are conscious of our role as public servants, and rightly pay more on average for the same health plan than private sector employees: we pay roughly 28 percent, while private sector workers typically pay only 15-25 percent.


Passage of the ACA in 2009 was hasty and disregarded the thorough review critical in passing a law of such massive proportions. As a result of the conflict between previously existing law and the regulations set forth by the ACA, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued guidance to clarify this conflict between previous law and the ACA. More specifically, OPM clarified that (1) Members of Congress and federal employees will obtain health insurance from the same health insurance exchanges as our fellow Americans, and (2) that the federal government, as the employer, is afforded legal standing to continue making employer contributions to employee health plans, just as private sector employers are allowed to do for their employees.

To be clear, I have stood firm that OPM's intervention in this matter was wholly inappropriate. Unfortunately, my colleagues and I in Congress were never afforded a voice or a vote of any kind in OPM's actions, which is unacceptable. To be clear, I do not support, nor will I accept special privileges, exemptions, or carve-outs of any kind from Obamacare for myself or my staff beyond what is afforded to every other non-government citizen; if hard-working Americans must endure the harsh financial impacts resulting from implementation of this law, we will stand and endure with them until a better solution is found.

In that same vein, I recently introduced an amendment to the government funding legislation to ensure *all* Americans, including federal employees, are equally subject to the full requirements of the ACA. To be clear, my only motivation has been ensuring that federal employees, including Congress and the Administration, remain fully accountable and entirely subject to the laws and decisions made by the whole body. Furthermore, whether you support or oppose the overall implementation of the ACA, your insights and opinions on the challenges you face each and every day help me grow as your Representative and further understand how best to bring about positive change. In that same vein, I was elected to represent *all* constituents of Florida's 15th District, who have overwhelmingly reached out to voice their concern and opposition to implementing the ACA.

While I have always been very forthcoming and open regarding my position concerning the ACA, I remain an elected civil servant and aim every day to make decisions and take action based on constituent feedback. More importantly, I know we may not always agree on every issue, however, I am hopeful that we can continue to maintain an open dialogue through the 113th Congress. I will always respect and carefully consider all of the input that comes to my desk before making any decisions.

It is an honor and a privilege to represent constituents like you of the 15th District of Florida. To learn more on how I may serve you, please visit <http://dennisross.house.gov>. Please feel free to continue to contact me in the future.

Sincerely,
 (signed)
Dennis A. Ross
Member of Congress

DR/MG