

Congressman Elijah Cummings

A time to stand up and fight

Two years ago, we stood up and led as Americans of good conscience came together in an historic effort to elect Barack Obama President of the United States. Now, once again, we must stand with our President and defeat those who are working to devastate his legislative achievements and block our nation's progress.

Our struggle is this year's election is more than a battle for Barack Obama and his legacy. As our President, himself, has reminded us, the political battles this year are more about us and our future than they are about him.

Our choices will have profound implications.

Will we, as a nation, move forward toward that better day in which all Americans share equitably in the benefits of a great society - or will we regress to the era in which it was every person for himself?

A future day will come when our grandchildren will ask of us, "When Barack Obama called upon you to stand up with him and fight for our future, did you answer The Call?"

I, for one, will stand up and fight.

This is our watch, and we cannot afford to fail.

At the September 19 Congressional Black Caucus Foundation dinner, President Obama spoke of all that we have accomplished during the last 20 months. On the subject of expanding access to health care, this is what he said.

"I want to remind everybody here that you did not elect me to do what was popular. You elected me to do what was right, and that's what we've been fighting together for -- to do what's right."

"That's why we passed health insurance reform that will make it illegal for insurance companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition," President Obama continued, "historic reforms that give over 30 million Americans the chance to finally obtain quality care, tackle the disparities in the health care system, and put a cap on the amount you can be charged in out-of-pocket expenses."

"Nobody should go broke because they got sick in a country like the United States of America" he challenged us. "Not here."

Barack Obama's message to us at that dinner defined the life or death struggle confronting millions of Americans.

Because of the *Affordable Care Act*, increased federal funding to the States, and the visionary leadership of Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, Marylanders who have been denied health insurance coverage because of "pre-existing conditions" can now obtain affordable insurance through the Maryland Health Insurance Plan (443) 738-0667.

For those of us with existing insurance coverage, essential consumer protections will be required by federal law as soon as our plan years renew.

No longer will insurance companies be able to cancel our policies when we get sick, limit our coverage through lifetime caps, deny coverage to sick children or deny insurance claims without giving us a right to appeal those denials.

We will be able to keep our children on our family plans until age 26. No longer will we be short-changed because our insurance company says that we have cost it too much in a year – and we will be able to receive expanded preventive care at no additional cost.

We are beginning to close the Medicare Prescription Drug “donut hole” for our seniors on Medicare, providing tax credits to small businesses for insurance coverage, and moving forward to eliminate racially-based health disparities.

This is change that we can believe in.

This is progressive change brought to us by a President in whom we can believe, by a Maryland Governor who has expanded our access to healthcare, and by everyday people like you and me who have worked so hard to achieve these reforms.

We are moving forward. However, reactionary forces are fighting these progressive reforms with every bit of disinformation and “spin” that they can muster.

Their stated objective is to take from us the better health care that we have won.

The election results on November 2 will dramatically affect our lives – and the lives of generations yet unborn.

That is why, once again, our community must answer “The Call.”

It is time for us to stand up and fight for what is right.

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in the United States House of Representatives.*