



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 25, 2020

**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Vice President Joe Biden on the
Affordable Care Act in Lancaster, Pennsylvania**

Good afternoon.

Today, in the middle of the worst global health crisis in living memory, Donald Trump will file a brief in the Supreme Court to attempt to strip health coverage away from tens of millions of families, and to strip the peace of mind away from more than 100 million people with pre-existing conditions.

If he succeeds, more than 23 million Americans could lose their coverage outright—including nearly a million Pennsylvanians.

Insurers could once again discriminate, or deny services, or drop coverage for people living with preexisting conditions like asthma, diabetes, and cancer.

And perhaps most cruelly of all, if Donald Trump has his way, complications from COVID-19 could become a new pre-existing condition.

Some survivors will experience lasting health impacts — like lung scarring and heart damage.

And if Donald Trump prevails in court, insurers would be allowed to strip away coverage or jack up premiums — simply because of their battle with the coronavirus.

Those survivors, having struggled and won the fight of their lives, would have their peace of mind stolen away at the moment they need it most.

They would live their lives caught in a vise between Donald Trump's twin legacies: his

failure to protect the American people from the coronavirus, and his heartless crusade to take health care protections away from American families.

I have called on Donald Trump many times to withdraw his lawsuit. Today, I am renewing that call.

Mr. President, drop the lawsuit. Stop trying to take away people's health care.

Now more than ever, stop trying to steal their peace of mind. I cannot comprehend the cruelty that is driving him to inflict this pain on the very people he is supposed to serve.

One of the families the Affordable Care Act has delivered peace of mind to is the Ritters—who live not far from here in Manheim, Pennsylvania.

Jan and Madeline Ritter were just four years old when their mom, Stacie, heard some of the most devastating words that a parent can ever hear. Both of her twins had been diagnosed with leukemia.

I promise you — that news — it stops your heart. It wrenches your entire world off of its axis. And the very last thing on your mind — the very last thing that should be on your mind— is whether you can afford treatment.

But when Stacie's twins got sick, there was no Affordable Care Act.

So, after the draining days and the endless nights, the harrowing stem-cell transplants, the fickle waves of hope and fear, after enduring more than any parent should have to endure, the Ritters still faced a future where their twins could be denied coverage for the rest of their lives.

The Affordable Care Act was created to put a stop to that inhumanity — to ensure that people like Stacie, thrust into the worst nightmare of their lives, could focus on the fight that matters.

Stacie's twins won their fight. They beat cancer — and now, they're 22 years old. Jan is studying early education at Elizabethtown College. Madeline just graduated from Arcadia University with a degree in international studies. And because of the law, insurance companies can no longer deny them coverage because they're survivors of cancer.

I'm proud of the Affordable Care Act.

In addition to protecting people with pre-existing conditions, this is a law that delivered vital coverage to more than 20 million Americans.

It's a law that bars insurance companies from capping Americans' benefits— and from charging women more simply because they are women.

It's a law that reduced prescription drug costs for nearly 12 million seniors, who would see their those costs spike — because the Medicare 'donut hole' would have suddenly reopened.

It's a law that saves lives.

But now, in the middle of the worst public health crisis in modern history, Donald Trump is suing to take the Ritters and millions more Americans — back to the way things were.

It's cruel, it's heartless, and it's callous.

And it's all because he can't abide the thought of letting stand one of President Obama's greatest achievements.

We've seen that same callousness in his handling of the coronavirus.

Just over three months ago, as most Americans were first coming to grips with the unprecedented scale and danger of the pandemic, President Trump publicly claimed that, "Anybody that wants a test can get a test."

That wasn't true. And he knew it.

Then, five days ago, at his campaign gathering in Tulsa, he admitted telling his people to, "slow the testing down, please." At first, his spokespeople tried to say he was joking. But then Trump himself said he wasn't joking.

He called testing, "a double-edged sword." Let's be crystal clear about what he means by that.

Testing unequivocally saves lives, and widespread testing is the key to opening up our economy again — so that's one edge of the sword.

The other edge: that he thinks finding out that more Americans are sick will make him look bad.

And that's what he's worried about. He's worried about looking bad.

Well, Donald Trump needs to stop caring about how he looks and start caring about what's really happening in America.

The number of cases is increasing in 29 states. We are going to be dealing with this for a long time. Trump can't wish it away. He can't bend it to meet his political wishes. There are no miracles coming.

We are going to have to step up as Americans — all of us — and do both the simple things — and the hard things — to keep our families and neighbors safe, to re-open our economy, and to eventually put the pandemic behind us.

And sadly — we are going to have to do it without responsible leadership from the White House. So it is up to us. All of us.

We're going to have to wear masks. And I know as Americans it's not something we're used to. But it matters. All the evidence from all over the world tells us it just might be the most effective thing we can do.

We're going to have to socially distance. It's not easy. It seems so strange to us. Not as Americans, but as human beings. We're built to talk, to laugh, to hug, to gather with other people. I know I am. I know you are. But for now, we have to socially distance. It matters.

We're going to have to find a way to keep our economy running as we bring the number of cases down. The president wants you to believe this is a choice between the economy and the public's health. He still hasn't grasped the most basic fact of this crisis: to fix our economy, we have to get control of the virus.

He's like a child who just can't believe this has happened to him. It's all whining and self-pity. This pandemic didn't happen to him. It happened to all of us.

And his job isn't to whine about it. His job is to do something about it.

If I have the honor of becoming President, I promise you I will lead.

I will do everything I can to take responsibility and ease that burden on you and your families. I will put your family first. And that will begin with a dramatic expansion of health coverage and bold steps to lower health care costs.

We need a public option now more than ever — especially at a time when more than 20 million people are unemployed.

That public option will allow every American— regardless of their employment status — the choice to get a Medicare-like plan.

It will force private insurers to keep premiums low and offer better coverage because, for the first time, they'll have to compete for your business against a public insurer that doesn't have a profit motive.

We're going to lower premiums for people buying coverage on their own by guaranteeing that no American ever has to spend more than 8.5 percent of their income on health insurance — and that number will be lower for lower-income families.

We're also going to further reduce costs by making it less expensive for Americans to choose plans with lower deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses by lowering prescription drug prices and by ending the practice called “surprise billing,” which can leave you with an unexpectedly high bill after you leave a hospital.

Here's the bottom line: my plan lowers health care costs and gets us to universal coverage quickly when Americans desperately need it.

Families are reeling right now — enduring illnesses, forced into risky choices, losing their employer plans in droves.

They need a lifeline now. That's what the families here today deserve. That's what families all across this nation deserve.

They don't need a president going into court to deny them health care. They need a president going into the White House who will fight for the health care they need.

If Donald Trump refuses to end his senseless crusade against health coverage, I look forward to ending it for him. And working quickly with Congress to dramatically ramp up protections, get America to universal coverage, and lower health care costs as soon as humanly possible.

This is my promise to you. When I am President, I will take care of your health coverage the same way I would for my own family. This is personal to me.

I was sworn into the United States Senate next to a hospital bed. My wife and daughter had

been killed in a car crash— and lying in that bed were my two surviving little boys.

I couldn't imagine what it would have been like if we didn't have the health care we needed immediately.

Forty years later, one of those little boys, my son Beau, was diagnosed with terminal cancer and given only months to live.

I couldn't imagine an insurance company coming in and saying, "for the last six months of your life, you're on your own" — which is exactly what happened to so many families before the Affordable Care Act.

So Amy, I understand.

And when I say I'll take care of your health coverage the same way I would for my family — there is nothing I take more seriously.

That's my promise to Stacie and Victoria and Amy and to every American.

That's what the presidency is — a duty to care.

A duty to care for everyone.

Not just those who voted for us.

For all of us.

And no trust is more sacred, no responsibility is more solemn, no purpose is more fundamental, than for a President to do absolutely everything he or she can to protect American lives.

So I want every single American to know: if you're sick, if you're struggling, if you're worried about how you're going to get through the day — I will not abandon you.

I will not leave you to face these challenges alone.

We are going to get through this — together.

And we are going to build our health care system, our economy, and our country back better than it has ever been before.

Thank you. God bless you, and God protect our troops.
