

HOLT ON HEALTH CARE VOTE: "FURTHEST WE HAVE COME TOWARD PROVIDING AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY HEALTH COVERAGE TO ALL AMERICANS"

House Passes Comprehensive Health Insurance Reform Saturday

(Washington, DC) – Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today voted for the Affordable Health Care Act, legislation that would provide secure and stable health coverage regardless of job status, ensure Americans will never be denied care if they get sick, and extend coverage to those not well served by the current system. The bill passed the House Saturday night by a vote of 220-215 and now awaits action in the Senate. Information about the bill - including bill text, a detailed summary, and a timeline for implementation – is available at holt.house.gov. A video of Holt's remarks during debate can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI9tP8bp6r4> .

"This is a historic vote. It is the furthest we have come toward providing affordable and quality health coverage to all Americans," Holt said. "I know this bill will continue to improve as we move through the legislative process. I look forward to working in the weeks ahead to complete this legislation and send it to the President for his signature."

While in the U.S. we will spend more than \$8,000 per person in 2009 for health care, 16 percent of New Jerseyans – and 46 million people in the U.S. – lacked insurance in 2007. Family insurance premiums are projected to rise from \$14,000 in 2009 to \$24,000 in 2019.

The legislation would provide millions of Americans with coverage they don't have, provide significant consumer protections to the hundreds of millions of Americans with private insurance, and provide improvements to Medicare by closing the prescription drug "doughnut hole" and promoting prevention and wellness. The bill would benefit those with and without

insurance by:

Establishing important consumer protections for all Americans. Insurers would be prohibited from excluding coverage or charging more based on pre-existing conditions like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, or pregnancy. Insurers also would be prohibited from dropping coverage if someone become sick and prohibited from setting annual or lifetime limits beyond which the insurer refuses to pay, leaving your family faced with bankruptcy. Insurance companies would have to spend more (at least 80 percent) of each premium dollar on actually providing healthcare.

Creating an insurance marketplace for those not well served by the system now. Those between jobs, employees of small businesses, or those who do not get coverage through their work would be able to purchase health insurance at group rates. All insurance plans in the store would need to cover a comprehensive set of necessary services and follow all the consumer protection standards. Among the plans from which a person could choose would be at least one public plan. Through competition and choice, coverage would be more affordable and accountable and would provide care better aligned with the best medical standards. According to a Congressional committee report, the bill would help 10,000 uninsured individuals in Central New Jersey gain access to affordable health insurance.

Strengthening health care for seniors. The proposal would strengthen Medicare in a number of important ways, including emphasizing more primary and preventive care, eliminating the doughnut hole in the Medicare prescription drug benefit, reducing redundant tests or unnecessary procedures, and eliminating wasteful subsidies to insurance companies. Not only would Medicare remain intact under this legislation, Holt said, it would become better.

"It would do all these things without adding to the deficit, while holding down costs for families and businesses in the future," Holt said. "The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that this legislation would not change the deficit over the next ten years, and in fact would produce a \$104 billion surplus."

Holt succeeded in including two provisions to the legislation. One would provide additional job training in order to expand the health care workforce. The bill would create a competitive National Health Workforce Online Training Grant program for universities, community colleges, non-profits, workforce investment boards, and others to increase the number of online training programs for individuals seeking health care jobs. The online job program would support

programs similar to one offered by Rutgers University and the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Another amendment Holt offered would create small employer benefit arrangements, which provide a new way for affiliated small businesses to join together to offer health insurance and other benefits to their employees. Holt first learned about this health pool arrangement from a Monmouth County small businessman.

"This bill is the culmination of one of the most open and deliberative processes in recent memory," Holt said. "During the past few years, Congressional committees held more than 53 committee hearings, debated and voted on almost 240 amendments, and considered health reform for 167 hours. We have held thousands of town meetings, read and responded to hundreds of thousands of letters, and met with health care experts and patients."