

Mr. Kinney's sacrifice and dedication to our country are an inspiration to us all. He is a man who defended our country at a time of tremendous need. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring his service, bravery, and dedication to his family and community.

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ASTORIA REGATTA

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HON. SUZANNE BONAMICI

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 25, 2019*

Ms. BONAMICI. Madam Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Astoria Regatta, the City of Astoria, and Clatsop County on the 125th celebration of the Regatta. This is a joyous milestone for one of the oldest festivals west of the Rocky Mountains and an important moment to pause and reflect on the significance of the Regatta to our region.

Since the Astoria Regatta's founding in 1894, it has celebrated our connection to the mighty Columbia River and our heritage as a seafaring and fishing community. The first festival, which evolved out of the custom of boat racing on the river, included a parade of 22 decorated yachts and the presence of the *U.S. Monitor Monterey*. Early Regattas featured a four-and-a-half mile swim across the river, and the popular Salmon Derby. Since then, the Regatta has grown with the additions of the Regatta Court, the Grand Land Parade, the Seaman's Memorial, the rose planting ceremony, and many other special community traditions.

Today, the Astoria Regatta embodies the best aspects of our region. Through the Royal Court, the Regatta helps develop the leadership skills of young women. The Regatta is also an opportunity to praise the dedication of community leaders who serve as Regatta Dignitaries: the Admiral, Admiral's Aide, and the Grand Marshals. And through the Seaman's Memorial, the Regatta allows us to remember and memorialize those we have lost on the river and the ocean.

Although World War I and World War II interrupted the celebration of the Astoria Regatta, the community always found a way to restore it. In fact, many of our long-standing community institutions have ties to the Regatta: in 1933, the newly-founded Astoria Yacht Club helped bring the Regatta back after the First World War, and the Clatsop County Fair began in 1905 as an agricultural exhibit of the Regatta. Past Regattas marked the Lewis and Clark Sesquicentennial Celebration in 1955, the opening of the Astoria-Megler Bridge in 1966, the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976, and the Bicentennial of Astoria in 2011.

We can only imagine what E.J. Smith, editor of *The Daily Morning Astorian*, and Frank M. Gunn, secretary of the Astoria Football Club, would think about the 125th anniversary of the tradition they started in 1894. Like us, surely they would be proud of the community that Astoria has become, the growth and vitality of this region, and the continuation of this grand tradition.

SUPPORT FOR H.R. 748

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 25, 2019*

Mr. COURTNEY. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman NEAL for his leadership managing this bill on the floor. As Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, his advocacy is a powerful message to the House to pass the Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act. I also want to thank Ranking Member BRADY and Rep. MIKE KELLY for their bipartisan efforts in support of this bill, defying the polarized politics that far too often dominates the health care debate.

Madam Speaker, this bill today comes with the support of a more than 650 health care stakeholders who, over the last ten years, have joined together to repeal the 40 percent excise tax on higher premium health plans scheduled to go into effect in 2022.

This tax was a late add on to the Affordable Care Act and has been rattling around in the federal tax code ever since, never having actually collected a penny of revenue, but nonetheless casting an statutory shadow over 180 million Americans' health plans—we know in real life from HR administrators and employee representatives it has added pressure to shift coverage into higher deductible health plans. As the Commonwealth Fund recently reported, the numbers of Americans who are underinsured as the result of high deductibles has grown by over 50 percent since 2005. Kaiser Family Foundation just reported that 31 percent of employer health plans will get hit by the tax in 2022, and that number will grow sharply soon after. Passage of this bill will stop that trend from worsening, lift the shadow that overhangs employer-sponsored plans, and give millions of teachers, factory workers, small businesses, firefighters and the like, relief.

As the bill's lead sponsor, I want to foot stomp the fact that repeal of the tax does not touch the architecture of the ACA's patient protections. Repeal is completely severable from the other 440 sections of the law and leaves intact essential health benefits, and the elimination of preexisting conditions exclusions and lifetime caps to name a few. Given that those patient protections have been in full operation for the last ten years, while this "zombie tax" has been in a coma during that time, it is abundantly clear that the tax is disconnected from the rest of the law. Lastly, I want to underscore the CBO determination that passage will not result in any increase in the number of uninsured.

There is one other concern that observers have raised, namely the impact on the national debt. Again, JCT has given a mixed report. The good news is that repeal this year 2019 will result in no budget impact in 2020 and 2021. In the following two years they estimate a loss of 21 billion in tax revenue. In the out years their projections grow exponentially, based on a theory of "wage effect" cause by the "thinning" of health plans' value and a corresponding increase in wages. To say that the "wage effect" theory is debatable is an understatement, and employee groups such as Wage Works, the AFL-CIO, police and firefighter groups ferociously deny the validity of the "wage effect" based on their real life experience at the collective bargaining table.

The only remaining question a reasonable observer might ask is why has repeal taken so long? Given the initial 5-year delay in the tax's effective date in 2010, based on Speaker Nancy Pelosi's opposition and the two subsequent delays until 2022, it is true that the warning flags were up on this tax early and Congress should have acted sooner. In the Congresses that followed 2010 ACA enactment, there was ample opportunity to get this done. In the 114th Congress an identical surgical repeal bill had 188 bipartisan cosponsors. In the 115th Congress a surgical bill had 304 bipartisan cosponsors. Despite that broad based support, neither Speaker John Boehner nor Paul Ryan ever called those bills up for a vote. I know because I was the lead Democratic sponsor on every one of those measures.

Madam Speaker, with 370 House cosponsors, I am hopeful an overwhelming tally tonight will send a laser-like message to the Senate to adopt this bill as soon as possible, as is.

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RECOGNIZING LILA MILLER AND ELIZABETH SAUNDERS FOR THEIR SUCCESS IN THE 2019 USROWING NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

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HON. JACK BERGMAN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 25, 2019*

Mr. BERGMAN. Madam Speaker, it's my honor to recognize Lila Miller and Elizabeth Saunders for their success in the 2019 USRowing National Championships. Through their perseverance and determination, Lila and Elizabeth have distinguished themselves as athletes and representatives of their community and Michigan's First District.

Although Lila is blind, she has learned to row over the past several years as a member of the Lake Leelanau Rowing Club. Together, she and Elizabeth have developed a passion for the sport—and rowing together at the USRowing National Championships, they brought home gold medals for the club. With rowers varying in age from 12 to the mid-80's, the Lake Leelanau Rowing Club is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization dedicated to promoting access to rowing for Michiganders of all ages and experience levels. They host national sculling clinics, rowing camps, and year-round programs for local youth and adults, including for those with visual impairments. These programs are held on the grounds and lakefront at Fountain Point Resort, Michigan's oldest waterfront resort and a National Historic Site. Fountain Point and Lake Leelanau offer the ideal location for cultivating a love of rowing, offering 17 miles of pristine water for rowers like Lila and Elizabeth to practice the sport.

Madam Speaker, it's my honor to congratulate Lila Miller and Elizabeth Saunders for their success in the 2019 USRowing National Championships. Michiganders can take great pride in knowing the First District is home to such exceptional individuals. On behalf of my constituents, I wish Elizabeth and Lila all the best in their future endeavors.