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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
FACSIMILE (202) 225-3974
MINORITY (202) 225-5051

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Joint Hearing on "Federal Implementation of ObamaCare: Concerns of State Governments"

September 18, 2013

Mr. Chairmen thank you for the opportunity to comment on this hearing. Let me be frank.

This is not a hearing—this is theater. I wish it was just a little bit entertaining. This is a bad script with a bad ending because some of my colleagues on the other side didn't like the way the presidential election turned out; didn't like the majority of the Supreme Court, including Chief Justice Roberts, finding the law to be constitutional, and are simply desperate to rewrite the play.

It is time to take the makeup and costumes off and get real. The Affordable Care Act is the law of the land, there will be no rewrites, no matter how much you try to rewrite the ending.

I am sickened by the efforts of some to sabotage this law at every turn. In some states the elected officials aren't even subtle about it. They don't even try to mask their blatantly political shenanigans under the guise of the public interest. Take the duly elected Insurance Commissioner of Georgia, who was caught on tape bragging to an audience of Republican campaign contributors and activists. Let's play the video.

He said he was doing everything in his power to be an "obstructionist." He pointed to the example of the Georgia Republican legislature, which invented a new requirement that Obamacare navigators be "licensed." His insurance department would "just ... *make up* a test" requiring navigators to pass the insurance agent test, just to obstruct them from conducting outreach to uninsured people. The only justification for this new requirement is that it helps obstruct implementation of Obamacare.

Unfortunately, he is not alone. The only witnesses the majority chose to invite are, like the Georgia commissioner, doing everything in their power to be obstructionists.

Florida state representative Matt Hudson is no particular expert on state concerns about ACA implementation. Mr. Hudson is himself busy creating concerns and barriers to

implementation. Recently, he introduced a bill suggested in “The State Legislator’s Guide to Repealing ObamaCare,” which was published by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a Koch brothers-funded entity.

Not every Republican tolerates the obstructionist tactics. In Kansas, the elected Insurance Commissioner, Sandy Praeger, has struggled to implement the Affordable Care Act, even as Governor Brownback sued to challenge the Constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act, returned a \$32 million federal grant to help the state set up health insurance exchanges and has called the Affordable Care Act “an abomination.”

Senators McCain and Coburn have both criticized their Republican colleagues for working to bring on a federal government shutdown just to stop funding for ACA implementation. Senator Coburn called it “dishonest.”

Sadly, this is a concerted campaign to deny people affordable health care being conducted by certain Republican elected officials, but it is being orchestrated by entities like ALEC and financed by billionaires like the Koch brothers.

I strongly believe in the importance of Congressional oversight. It is our job to make sure the laws of this land—laws passed by Congress—are carried out effectively and efficiently. But this committee is not engaging in oversight. It is not interested in getting to the facts, in seeing the law properly implemented, or in identifying improvements or technical fixes. This Committee has instead chosen to undermine the law, and encourage the avowed obstructionists who are throwing hurdles in its way at every step of the process.

Mr. Chairmen, this effort has become a theater of the absurd. While I appreciate that you have now accepted some of our witnesses to try and convince the audience that there is some semblance of balance to your script, your play will not make it to opening night, and will be relegated to the dustbin of theatrical failures once the real show begins its run.

I sincerely hope this is the beginning of the end of the charade to undermine a law that has been found to be constitutional—and I would like to remind my colleagues that we have sworn to uphold the law and the constitution, and that is a duty I take seriously. It is time we actually do our job.