

During August recess, many legislators have heard an unexpected amount of discontent from their constituents about what is happening on Capitol Hill, particularly regarding healthcare. Some people are justifiably terrified at what the government could do to healthcare, should it get its claws even further into it.

Others demand a public option for health insurance and are adamant that healthcare be treated as yet another absolute entitlement.

One thing everyone agrees on is that the final bill needs to be read and understood by all legislators before a vote is taken.

To any American, this is common sense.

In Washington, that is unlikely to happen.

There is much confusion and debate over what is and is not in the reform plan being considered. Are there or are there not so-called death panels? What are the end-of-life consultations really for?

How will private insurance be affected?

Can you keep your current plan or will you eventually be forced into a government plan?

Will it pay for elective abortions or not?

What are the implications for medical privacy?

The truth is no one knows what will be in the final bill until it is on the House floor, and provisions could be added in and taken out in the wee hours of the morning before.

In February, the House was forced to vote on an over 1,000 page “stimulus” bill that had first been posted on the internet just after midnight the morning of the vote. It passed. Then in June, House leaders rushed a vote on the cap-and-trade bill, even though an over 300 page “manager’s amendment” making substantive changes to the bill, was introduced shortly after 3:00 a.m. the morning of the vote.

Washington thrives on crisis. If enough people can be convinced that we are in an emergency, they will more likely tolerate rushing legislation to the floor like this.

Last minute changes will be slipped in, benefitting who knows what special interests and at what expense to the taxpayer.

But the mantra is repeated over and over: We are in a crisis. We must act immediately.

It should be unconscionable for legislators to vote in

favor of legislation they have not had the opportunity to read. This is why I have re-introduced the Sunlight Rule, H.Res 216. The Sunlight Rule prohibits any piece of legislation from being brought before the House of Representatives unless it has been available to read for at least 10 days.

The Sunlight Rule allows citizens to move for censure of any House Member who votes for a bill in violation of this act. Because the Sunlight Rule could never be waived, any Member could raise a point of order requiring any bill in violation to be immediately pulled from the House calendar until it can be brought to the floor in a manner consistent with this rule. This rule does not require that Members read the bills.

It merely guarantees the opportunity to do so.

It has 4 cosponsors.

Justice Louis Brandeis famously said, “Sunlight is the best disinfectant.” The Sunlight Rule would do much towards negating the cycle of pseudo-crises and

cleaning up the legislative process here in Washington. I sincerely hope this is the year Congress remembers its deliberative duties and passes it.