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John Stossel's Take

Commentary from Co-Ancor of ABC News' "20/20"



[John Stossel](#) is ABC News' Co-Ancor of "20/20" and New York Times best-selling author of [Give Me A Break](#) & [Myths, Lies and Downright Stupidity](#). His "Give Me a Break" commentaries take a skeptical look at a wide array of issues, such as education, the economy, parenting, and more.

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Obamacare II

07/02/2009 3:16 PM

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The New Republic's [Jonathan Chait](#) raises good questions about Conservatives' reflexive criticism of Comparative Effectiveness Research, Medicare cuts and "rationing":

"Health care has become the new defense spending--a category of public outlay that the right has trained itself to defend in even the most wasteful iterations. ... Wouldn't you expect the Ted Kennedy bleeding-heart crowd, rather than the likes of Rush Limbaugh, to be raising the alarm against the heartless, tight-fisted government? Something curious is going on here."

Here's part of a response to Chait from Mike Tanner of the [Cato Institute](#):

"Every person should have the absolute right to spend their own money on whatever they want, including buying as much health care as they want. And, if they are spending their own money, they will make their own rationing decisions based on price and value. That CT scan that looked so desirable when someone else was paying, may not be so desirable if you have to pay for it yourself. The consumer himself becomes the one who says no....Of course, as a compassionate society we may choose to help others pay for some care. That's a worthwhile debate to have. But our resources are not unlimited. Choices will have to be made. And, therefore, the real question should be: who will make those choices."

The rest of Tanner's comment [here](#).

And Stuart Butler of [The Heritage Foundation](#) was refreshingly blunt:

"This article is rubbish and Jonathan knows better ... Heritage was among the strongest opponents of the 2003 Republican Medicare drug bill, pharma's # 1 legislative objective."

The rest of Butler's comment he wrote to Tori, who's on my staff, is [here](#).

July 2, 2009 in [healthcare](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Share](#) | [User Comments \(27\)](#)

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John: You are proving to be a mixed bag when it comes to opposition to government intervention in the economy. All morality (ie, what "should" or "should not" be done) goes out the window with the use of force. The fact that government *chooses* to interfere in the market, thus violating our rights, does not give one the impetus to argue how wastefully or efficiently they spend our money. They should not be doing it. Period.

By arguing for government efficiency in market manipulation, rather than taking an adamant stance against all government interference of the economy, you are conceding all principles.

Posted by: [Brian](#) | Jul 2, 2009 3:44:45 PM

The Reagan/Bush train wreck that we are living was enabled by people like Stossel and their idiotic "business = good, government = bad" rants.

Posted by: ed | Jul 2, 2009 3:49:50 PM

John,
Did you link to the wrong article? I can't find Rush Limbaugh mentioned at the link.

Posted by: DR | Jul 2, 2009 3:51:37 PM

So what is John Stossel's take? All I'm seeing is a bunch of other people's opinions. Are we to assume John Stossel doesn't have a personal opinion on this matter?

Posted by: john | Jul 2, 2009 3:51:50 PM

The argument against any government involvement at all is a non-starter. It may leave you with uncompromised principles, but it also shuts you out of any serious discussion.

It doesn't do anyone any good if people with reason and good ideas are left shouting at the rain while we creep slowly toward totalitarianism.

Posted by: A different Brian | Jul 2, 2009 3:58:52 PM

There will always be robber barons, and there will always be a need to level the playing field. Where else can you go, except to the government? As good as the Auto Industry has been for the middle class, that industry bought up mass transit companies to shut them down. Limiting choice. This is what the medical industry now wants to do. The United States Declaration of Independence, which you probably hold as gospel when it suites your needs, says "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness". "Life" is first. We can ensure Life, by creating National Healthcare Program.

Posted by: Joseph | Jul 2, 2009 4:08:16 PM

"Everyone deserves Health care" is a sham just like "everyone deserves a house" was...when will we start learning from our mistakes?

Posted by: Matt | Jul 2, 2009 4:22:19 PM

The argument for 'some' government involvement is a slippery slope. Once you ok the idea of intervention for the "public good" then you change the moral dynamics so that government can do anything. I have trouble taking people seriously when they say they only want "a little intervention for the public good".

Posted by: A different Brain | Jul 2, 2009 4:23:08 PM

It would be thoroughly wonderful if everyone had exceptional health care. In a perfect world, every senior and every child would have the care and medications they needed. It would be wonderful if everyone had a lovely home, with two new cars, a flat screen TV with 300 channels in HD and all the fillet mignon they could eat. Everyone should have a good paying job and a great education. We might as well throw in world peace and tickets to the Super Bowl for everyone that wants them while we are here.

The fundamental problem with this picture is that we live in a world that has limits. We all don't get to go to Harvard because they don't have room for everyone, as an example of those limits (plus a few admission requirements that may be somewhat of a challenge to some). The various states have signed up for wonderful public service programs and pensions and health care for their workers and teachers. Those are all great ideas...they are noble goals. Places like California have found all this largess and ignoring the limits has consequences though. Our folks in Washington don't seem to understand the limits thing though.

That is the fundamental issue with any national health care effort. You already have spending programs in the Federal government that far exceed the government's revenues. The only way you spend more is to either get more revenue or go in debt more and we are probably getting close to being tapped out on issuing more IOU's to foreign investors.

The top 50% of the taxpayers pay over 97% of the taxes today. The people with all the good ideas don't want the bottom 50% to pay more taxes...they want them to pay even less. The hole the government is already in is in the trillions. Do you really think you can suck enough in taxes out of the group already carrying the load to pay trillions more to fund a new version of Medicare?

Senators Kennedy and Dodd, now propose taxing businesses that don't offer health care. That would only cover a fraction of the national health care bill. Apparently they didn't see the unemployment figures today...nothing like throwing a few more expenses in the form of more taxes on business to help spur new employment.

The fundamental problem with all these good ideas in creating equality for everyone is that when there are limits, the only way it works is that the more people consuming the resources the less everyone gets. It produces equality alright, we all average down. As Winston Churchill said, the weakness of capitalism is the unequal blessings it provides and the virtue of socialism is that it ensures equal misery. That is what you have found in every country that has put in some form of government health care. You have rationing of resources because there is not enough to go around so you get to share the misery. Because they have to wait two years to get some medical care you have Canadians coming the US to get the care they need...if they have the money to do it. You will create the same situation here.

You will hear the supporters telling you it won't cost you anything...they will tax the "other guy" to pay for it. They will tell you that you can keep your current health insurance if you are happy with it, but private insurance will have a hard time competing with government insurance since the government really does not have to cover its overhead. They will tell you that your care will be the same and those 48 million that has been touted as not having health care will not be filling your doctor's office or using that hospital bed when you need it. I assume we are going to find a whole lot of additional medical resources in the form of doctors and hospitals to take on these under or uninsured, which typically have greater needs than those that have been insured. No, national health care will not be a problem...everything will be the same...no new taxes...no rationing of resources...you will keep your doctor and things will just be the same except all those 48 million uninsured will get health insurance. Yeah, that's the way it will be.

Posted by: Zebhead | Jul 2, 2009 4:56:23 PM

Joseph, would you stop repeating folklore?

"As good as the Auto Industry has been for the middle class, that industry bought up mass transit companies to shut them down."

This is false. People *chose* cars because they offered more mobility. Cars became cheaper and cheaper and people *wanted* to use them over the mass transit systems. The mass transit systems stopped being profitable.

Nothing evil there, just plain supply/demand.

Oh... and ed,

This situation is not caused by Bush/Reagan. If you believe that then you have no understanding of how much the government currently impacts the marketplace.

The government has exerted way too much pressure in health care and housing over the last 50 years. When the government makes a mistake, it makes a HUGE impact. What we are seeing right now is the fruit of government intervention. The government *created* the housing bubble and it popped. Normally an industry would learn from this mistake. Not the government! Barney Frank wants to do it all over again!

Posted by: Jeff | Jul 2, 2009 6:48:32 PM

The consumer himself becomes the one who says no..

What a crock! someone making \$25,000 a year has no choice.

You talk about rationing health care all I hear from you is ration according to the ability to pay. A true bottom feeder

Your attitude is self serving and despicable.

Posted by: Thinking | Jul 2, 2009 6:55:02 PM

I think this is the Obama stimulus train wreck.

Posted by: Cubby | Jul 2, 2009 7:17:54 PM

People should choose to do what they want to do and buy what they want to buy! But in a historical time like this with the potential to miracles and corruptions and destructions at the same time the American enterpenuer has proven to be naive and misguided in their choices to succeed and maintina success in a true sense! Knowledge of self and societal sccess and Spiritual Excellence must be given to the masses!Democracy does not just belong to democrats and values are not just Republicans and Power Balance and unity will be needed to change the dark times we are experiencing that stems from ignorance in sometimes corrupted sophestication of other cultures!Self and Societal Knowledge will free us and bring diverse unity

Posted by: [RoseParvin](#) | Jul 2, 2009 7:29:42 PM

Last I checked, the world-wide death rate was still running at 100%. All this money being spent to avoid what is inevitable by a couple of years, months or even days. Die today or die tomorrow. Either way you're still dead. Why waste everyone's money along the way?

Posted by: DZ&F | Jul 2, 2009 7:39:13 PM

It doesn't matter if you're 5 or 105. Unless you are in excruciating emotional or physical pain, you want to live. I want to live as much as the next person, but does that mean I should bankrupt my family or my country in pursuit of that goal? If I want to blow my own cash buying myself an extra couple of days that's one thing. But I have no right to expect total strangers to fund my end-of-days or chronic condition. Healthcare is a commodity not a right. Let people spend their own money on however they want to live. We may end up with fewer days on Earth but they'll be great ones.

Posted by: DZ&F | Jul 2, 2009 8:15:25 PM

Comparative Effectiveness Research (CRE) studies to compare and determine optimal treatments in medicine are valid only for the population studied. But, most such studies involve selecting only those with a single defined disease, usually otherwise healthy population, for study. Those with more than one diagnosis are usually excluded from the study. As are children, especially infants, women, especially if pregnant or possibly so, the elderly, etc., etc. So, the results cannot necessarily be generalized to those not studied. It shouldn't surprise you that those populations not studied outnumber those studied. CER is good as far as it goes, but in the hands of mindless bureaucrats, even medically trained bureaucrats, is liable to do more harm than good. And, enforced CER has the potential to kill innovation in medical treatment. For an example of a clear advance that would never happen under CER, study the story of lidocaine for cardiac arrhythmias. There's lots more to learn.

Posted by: Bob C | Jul 3, 2009 1:33:08 AM

I have just read that Mr. Stossel was unhappy that ABC pulled the insurance story to cover Jackson's death. That is an excuse, I'll bet my freedom they pulled it so they wouldn't hurt the vote and get better access to THE ALMIGHTY O. "It can't happen in America" will still be repeated the day the government abolishes the constitution. And it always starts with a state run media!

Posted by: Lonnie Duffey | Jul 3, 2009 8:39:30 AM

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Posted by: Lonnie Duffey | Jul 3, 2009 8:39:39 AM

First of all, having government control our healthcare will "ruin" our country. I know people without insurance really want this but they don't realize how devastating this will be to our country since most of them are not educated enough to know. There are other "options" where we don't need to rely on the government. Let the government have its own program for those without insurance and let the people who have worked hard for their money over many years and have been motivated to take care of their families, have their own health insurance and doctors WITHOUT a government handout! Everyone in America does not need to be penalized. I guess it would be considered "public" and "private" healthcare with the ones with private healthcare paying their own expenses having the better doctors. Maybe this will motivate the other people to get to that point in their lives...to have "private" insurance. Besides that's how they mainly do it in Europe. Canada has gov't. run healthcare and if you go online and see how this is working, you will see LONG lines at the doctors office and will hear about people who have "died" waiting for certain "simple" procedures. Do Americans really want this kind of life style????????????

Posted by: tbarry | Jul 3, 2009 12:56:21 PM

Also, government (especially Pelosi, the senile one...) has NO IDEA how to run our healthcare system. Who would actually trust most of them? I think, we the people, should make our medical decisions and get "some" gov't. help if we need it and let the ones who "don't" take care of themselves. What's wrong with this idea?? Come on, have you seen how Pelosi and Barney Frank have tried to run things already?? They are totally "clueless" along with several of their friends.

Posted by: tbarry | Jul 3, 2009 1:12:03 PM

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