

AMSPECBLOG

The Corrupt Process of Health Care Reform

By Doug Bandow on 7.25.09 @ 10:15AM

Obama-style health care reform would be bad enough if it was pure. But it is impossible to simultaneously expand coverage and cut costs without changing incentives facing patients. Health savings accounts and consumer-directed health care attempt to so. But a government takeover of the medical system would substitute bureaucratic diktat for individual choice. That means costs would be cut by limiting access to medical care. Yet most Americans assume that health care "reform" is supposed to increase their treatment options. Surprise!

Unfortunately, Obama-style health care reform is not pure. My Cato Institute colleague Michael Cannon points out how the process has become as corrupt as any other in Washington. Wal-Mart isn't the only company which is attempting to use government to its own advantage. He writes:

In May, President Barack Obama announced that industry lobbyists had agreed to reduce the growth of health care spending by 1.5 percentage points each year, which would yield just enough savings to cover the uninsured. The lobbyists quickly denied that was the agreement, prompting an administration official to backtrack ("the president misspoke"), before un-backtracking ("I don't think the president misspoke").

Since then, the administration has announced similar deals with industry groups who have supposedly put self-interest aside to make a contribution to health care reform.

If only that were true. Far from being "game-changers," those agreements are the same old Washington game of bribes, backroom deals, profiteering and protectionism -- and a harbinger of what health care will look like if the president's reforms succeed.

The next time you hear the president calling for health care reform, ask reform for whom? The public? Or the interest groups which typically dominate the legislative process?

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