

AMSPECBLOG

## Patrick Henry's Health Reform

By Joseph Lawler on 8.17.09 @ 10:02AM

Cato's Jim Harper lays it out clearly: someone has to ration health care, because resources are scarce and wants are infinite. The people doing the rationing can be you, your family, and your doctor, or it can be bureaucrats -- i.e., "death panels." Patrick Henry would choose the liberty to decide for himself.

And as far as government death panels go, Betsy McCaughey, who has been blamed by many for the recent talk of death panels in the Obama reform plan, defends some of the more narrow assertions she has made, in today's web lineup. In some specific situations, she argues, government policies could put the the end-of-life determinations of doctors at odds with the desires of patients.

Elsewhere, Ross Douthat argues that Republicans, who have a rich tradition of saying no, should be very much involved in determining the amount and kinds of care Medicare patients receive, and that their decisions should reflect a kind of stinginess. In other words, bureaucrats should make tough decisions for patients -- doesn't sound very "conservative" to me. In fact it sounds a little bit like he's choosing the death panel option that Harper laid out.

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