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Posted at 12:37 PM ET, 03/8/2011

No, Republicans don't have a health-care plan. Yes, they do need one.

By Ezra Klein

I think the Right is having a bit of trouble figuring out what its line on health-care reform is supposed to be right now. Over at her blog, my colleague Jennifer Rubin [writes](#) that it's a myth that Republicans don't have a health-care reform plan. Look at Paul Ryan's Roadmap, she says, which has lots of health-care reform ideas in it. Over at Cato, libertarian health-wonk Michael Cannon [argues](#) that it'd be crazy for Republicans to propose a health-care reform plan when simply attacking the Democrats' plan is working so well. "Their base is happy," Cannon writes, "It wants an all-out assault on ObamaCare, and congressional Republicans are giving it to them. Republicans are even winning the ObamaCare debate among the broader public."

I think Cannon has the better of this argument. The Republican Party has been very clear that it *does not* endorse the Ryan Roadmap. As Robert Costa wrote at [the National Review](#), "as Ryan preps for a spring budget battle, [Eric] Cantor, House Speaker John Boehner, and others are not showing much eagerness to take up the roadmap's specifics. Ryan's project, which proposes we curb the looming debt crisis by moving toward a defined-contribution model for entitlements over the next several decades, languishes."

There's nothing I love more than a good health-care plan debate, so I'd be very glad to see some senior players in the Republican Party begin endorsing health-care plans. But as of yet, they're not doing it. The closest they've come is [H.R. 9](#), which directs a couple of House committees to develop health-care ideas by some unspecified date in the future. I'd say H.R.9's existence actually manages to undercut both Rubin and Cannon's arguments: It simultaneously shows that Republicans haven't settled on a health-care plan but think they'll have to soon. And they're right about that. By 2012, the party is going to have to be able to agree on something, because their presidential nominee is going to have to have a plan of his or her own.

By Ezra Klein | March 8, 2011; 12:37 PM ET
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They do have one: Get sick and die.

Posted by: lauren2010 | March 8, 2011 12:44 PM | [Report abuse](#)

My question is not, "Do the GOPers have a plan for HCR?"

My question is, "Do they have a plan for ANYTHING?"

Posted by: grat_is | March 8, 2011 1:11 PM | [Report abuse](#)

Get rid of the current government of Kalifornia and replace it wit monkeys. the monkeys can do a better job of running this state of sad affairs. Start with the Governor.

Posted by: cfbrandon69gmailcom | March 8, 2011 1:31 PM | [Report abuse](#)

"By 2012, the party is going to have to be able to agree on something, because their presidential nominee is going to have to have a plan of his or her own."

Or not -- particularly if Romney is the nominee.

If the Obama campaign thinks it's too taboo to talk about and Romney thinks it's too taboo to talk about, both sides would develop safe talking points and stick to them every time health care comes up, and neither will go after the other for fear of making it a topic.

If it plays out that way, I think that's good for Obama. He wins the issue, and it's off the board.

Posted by: Porchland | March 8, 2011 1:34 PM | [Report abuse](#)

*****But as of yet, they're not doing it. The closest they've come is H.R. 9, which directs a couple of House committees to develop health-care ideas by some unspecified date in the future*****

Of course they have no plan, and the reason is even the most well thought-out, most market-friendly health care reforms require AN ENLARGED ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT. There's simply no way around this fact, unless one is prepared reduce access for vulnerable groups (which is what Ryan care does).

Simply put, the GOP's lurch to the right has rendered it ideologically incapable of a meaningful contribution to healthcare reform.

Posted by: Jasper999 | March 8, 2011 1:34 PM | [Report abuse](#)

I think you might have missed the bigger point about Ryan's plan, which is that Ryan does nothing to address what PPACA addressed: the prohibition on pre-existing conditions, guaranteed issue, etc. Nor does it do anything to address health care at all for anyone who is under 65. All Ryan's plan does is purportedly solve government's fiscal crisis by slashing Medicare funding. Which is fine if that's the only goal. But it misses your original point, which is Ryan does nothing for those of us under 65, while Republicans are pretending they have plans. That Jennifer Rubin would think she scores a big point by referring to Ryan shows that she doesn't get it -- the Republicans don't have a plan. Moreover, the other ideas that get thrown out there -- tort reform, HSAs, etc -- would do almost nothing about costs whatever their other merits (tort reform would save only a few billion a year at best, and HSAs and high deductible plans do nothing to address where the real costs are -- catastrophic care -- because HSAs and high deductibles essentially are just catastrophic health care plans). Selling insurance across state lines (as Republicans want that to be done) would never pass once it's explained for what it really does -- reduce costs through massive deregulation.

Republicans really do have no plan. But there is a reason for that -- at the end of the day, all they want is tax cuts and deregulation, and then they're happy.

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