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IBD EDITORIALS



Why Health Bill Makes No Sense

Posted 03/12/2010 07:12 PM ET

Health Reform: So it's come down to this — desperate Democratic leaders strong-arming members on the worst bill ever before they go home to explain to constituents why they decided to commit political suicide.

We've said just about all we've had to say on this issue — actually dating back to 1993-94, when we wrote nearly 100 editorials in opposition to HillaryCare. Since January of last year, we've weighed in 150 more times against the latest version of socialized medicine.

But to review, here are just 15 reasons why a government takeover of the finest medical system in the world makes no sense at all:

1. The people don't want it! This, we would think, should have some bearing on decision-making. Yet the Democrats forge ahead without consent of the governed. In the latest Rasmussen poll, 53% opposed the Democrats' reform while 42% were in favor. More than four in 10 "strongly" opposed; just two in 10 "strongly" favored. This jibes with other surveys, including our own IBD/TIPP Poll, taken since last year.

2. Doctors don't want it! A survey we took last summer of 1,376 practicing physicians found that 45% would consider leaving their practices or taking early retirements if the Democrats' reform became law. In December, the results were validated by a Medicus poll in which 25% of doctors said they'd retire early if a public option is implemented and another 21% would stop practicing even though they were far from their retirement years. Even if the bill doesn't have a "public option," nearly 30% said they'd quit the profession under the plans being considered.

3. Half the Congress doesn't want it! Not a single Republican backed the health care bill that cleared the Senate on Christmas Eve 60-39. House passage was by a slim 220 to 215, and the lone Republican "aye" has since switched to "no." Columnist Michael Barone says other changes would put the House vote today at 216-215 in favor, and he has doubts Democrats can even muster 216.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi made her job of securing yes votes even more difficult last week when she told a meeting of county officials that "we have to pass the bill so you can find out what is in it." Members of Congress aren't waiting: They've already exempted themselves from whatever they inflict on us.

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03/15/2010 12:00:22 PM ET

Investing Tip

Beware of low volume at the breakout.



4. People are happy with the health care they've got! Polls show that 84% of Americans have health insurance and that few are displeased with what they've got. Last month, the St. Petersburg Times looked at eight polls and reported that satisfaction rates averaged 87%.

5. It doesn't even cover the people they set out to cover! Supporters of government-run health care say there are as many as 47 million Americans — 9 million to 10 million of them illegal aliens — without medical insurance. The Democrats' plans, however, will put only 31 million of the uninsured under coverage.

6. Costs will go up, not down! Democrats say their plans will cost less than \$1 trillion over the first decade. But analyst Michael Cannon at the Cato Institute puts the cost at \$2.5 trillion over the first 10 years. Even if we go with the government's lower estimates, the cost is already on the rise. A new estimate by the Congressional Budget Office puts the cost of the Senate bill at \$875 billion over 10 years, \$4 billion more than its original projection. Imagine how fast costs would soar if one of the bills became public policy.

7. Real cost controls are nowhere to be found! The Democrats are offering no meaningful tort reform that will help push down the high malpractice insurance premiums that are a burden to doctors and their patients. Nor are they considering any other cost-saving provisions, such as allowing the sale of individual health plans across state lines or easing health insurance mandates.

8. Insurance premiums will rise, not fall! One goal of nationalizing health care is to lower costs, to bend the spending curve downward. Yet, as Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin acknowledged Wednesday, that won't be the case.

"Anyone who would stand before you and say, 'Well, if you pass health care reform, next year's health care premiums are going down,' I don't think is telling the truth," he said from the Senate floor. "I think it is likely they would go up."

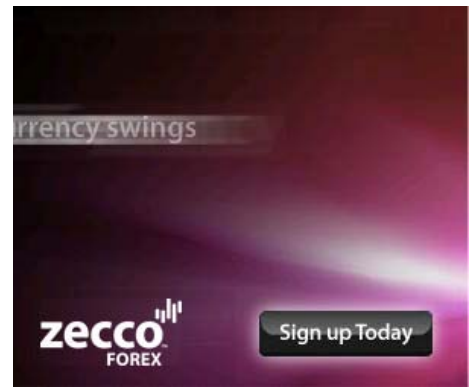
An analysis completed by the CBO at the request of Sen. Evan Bayh confirms Durbin's suspicions. Insurance coverage in the individual market will "be about 10% to 13% higher in 2016 than the average premium for nongroup coverage in that same year under current law," it concluded.

9. Medicare is already bankrupting us! The Medicare trust fund, which has unfunded obligations of \$37.8 trillion, will be insolvent in 2017. How can lawmakers justify another entitlement that will cost trillions when they can't pay for existing liabilities?

10. There aren't enough doctors now! Last month, 26% of physicians responding to a Web poll on Sermo.com, which calls itself "the largest online physician community," said they had been forced to close, or were considering closing, their solo practices. Providing coverage for an additional 31 million Americans when the number of doctors is shrinking won't improve our health care.

11. The doctor-patient relationship will be wrecked! The latest IBD/TIPP Poll, taken just last week, found that Americans, by a wide 48%-26% margin, believe the doctor-patient relationship will decline if the Democrats' plan is passed.

12. Medical care will also deteriorate! IBD/TIPP has also found that 51% of Americans believe care would get worse under government control. Only 10.5% said they felt it would improve. In our doctor poll, 72% disagreed with administration claims that the government could cover 47 million more people with better-quality care at lower cost.



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13. Rationing of care is inevitable! Health care is not an unlimited resource and must be rationed, either by the individual, providers or government. In Britain and Canada, where the government does the rationing, medical treatment waiting lists are sometimes deadly and quite often excessively long.

For instance, late cancer diagnoses in an overcrowded public health care system cause up to 10,000 needless deaths a year in Britain. The reasons cited for the late diagnoses include doctor delay, delay in primary care, system delay and delay in secondary care.

14. Private health insurers will be destroyed! Added mandates and price controls will force many insurers to simply get out of the health plan business because it will no longer be profitable.

15. It's probably unconstitutional! One way to help bring down the number of uninsured is to demand that those without coverage buy health plans. But the government has never passed a law requiring Americans to buy any good or service. Constitutional scholars say any such mandate would likely draw a legal challenge.

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Posted By: BradO(1560) on 3/15/2010 | 12:18 PM ET

Just throw a tanker load of "free" government gasoline on that fiscal bonfire of a budget to really get the fire blazing. We are already broke, but nobody told the Democrats. As long as they can print money and sucker the Chinese into buying our bonds, it's all good. This sure feels like the death-throws of a dying Republic. Talk of "deeming" Health Care Legislation to have passed in the House seems to confirm the diagnosis.

Posted By: C400Pilot(290) on 3/15/2010 | 11:54 AM ET

Gee, BaltimoreJoe, how many have even a clue what the Citizens United case represents? Even "Constitutional Law Professor" Obama demonstrated abject ignorance about the case, and even about how court rulings work.

Posted By: BaltimoreJoe(1160) on 3/15/2010 | 11:21 AM ET

I don't like how many of these points rely on polling. Guess what? The Constitution protects the people not only from the government, but also from themselves. Polls show that the American people overwhelmingly disagree with the Supreme Court's decision in the Citizens United case. But what the people don't like is actually better for them in the grander scheme of things. That's the benefit of returning to America's roots in the Constitution.

Posted By: fancy(175) on 3/15/2010 | 10:12 AM ET

Taxes will go up, premiums will go up, there will be a shortage of Doctors, quality care will go down, dependence on the Government will go up, congressmen passing this bill will have nothing to do with it for their own families, waiting for treatment will be long periods of time (if the Government approves your treatment), small businesses will either go under or pay the fine instead of the premiums. Why would you not like this bill? Big Brother is smothering us.

Posted By: nickb_384(330) on 3/15/2010 | 8:28 AM ET

The bottom line is our country is going broke. If we continue with these wreckless spending sprees, we will eventually be insolvent. Then NOBODY will receive ANYTHING (except of course politicians)! Do you Liberals understand this concept or is it too complicated or vague for you to grasp?

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