

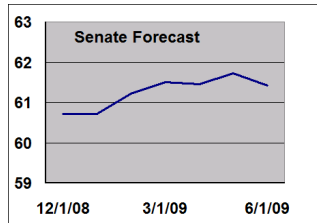
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The Right's Health Care Argument

by: [DocJess](#)

Thu Jun 18, 2009 at 06:09:58 AM EDT

I went to the Cato Institute yesterday with high hopes.

Sometimes, a paucity of words says it all. I don't normally Twitter since [@DemConWatch](#) sends out all the DCW posts automatically. But I had Twitter open on my iPhone because I wanted to keep up with the Iranian situation, so sent this from my personal Twitter [feed](#):

@DocJessDCW #healthcare At Cato forum.
Not just wrong, but actually lying. Zero doctor input to conference.

And that about says it all. With the exception of Jon Kingsdale, executive Director of the Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector, who spoke on Massachusetts' experience with state-led Single Payer, the morning speakers were all dedicated to taking bits of information, and spinning them so they lacked veracity.

A simple example: Mr. Kingsdale said that the rate of uninsured people in Massachusetts had fallen to 2.6% since the program was implemented in 2007. Down from over 10% when they began. (Massachusetts has always had a high health insurance rate compared to most other states.) One of the other panel members, speaking immediately after Mr. Kingsdale said that he was wrong, the number was well over 5%. Mr. Kingsdale retorted that the 5% number was from late 2007, and this 2.6% number was correct, as it was from the end of 2008. The number could easily be lower at the end of 2009.

The panel then made a big deal of "full insurance" being less than 100%. They didn't seem to recognize that there will always be people who choose to live off the grid, or have just arrived to Massachusetts and are still in that initial 30 day period of switching over addresses, drivers' licenses, etc. Face it, 100% of all Americans don't have Social Security numbers.

I'll spare you from becoming as upset as I did, but will give you a few of my pick faves:

First, there was zero medical input. Not a single doctor on any of the panels. How do you talk health care without getting a single medical opinion? Everyone likes to cite the AMA, but that is a **lobbying** organization to which an increasing number of doctors do not belong. The AMA, by the way, has fought against Medicare since its inception a generation ago, and is no friend to patients.

In the opening comments, Ed Crane, Cato's president mentioned that he believes the current doctor shortage is due to payments set by Medicare. If there was no Medicare, there would be more doctors, he contends. He also pointed out that there is adequate competition because there are 1,300 insurance companies in the US. He obviously doesn't read my [work](#). If you're non-competitive, you can't get clients.

Rep Paul Ryan (R-WI) said that "you can always fire your insurance company." I'd like him to tell this to a 50 year old diabetic. Sure, walk right out of your company-paid policy - there are tons of places waiting to insure you. Probably all 1,299 of Ed's other insurers. (Is the sarcasm dripping off the page yet?)

Michael Tanner, of Cato, said that medical mandates are "a violation of individual liberty and choice". He said the ONLY



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thing close was conscription. Someone should point out to Mr. Tanner that while mandates may well deny one's ability to say "no", they don't seem to be a problem in areas like auto insurance nor homeowner's insurance. I'm betting he has both - hard to drive or own a house without them.

I had honestly tried to find some little gem that would explain why the right is so in favour of continuing the current situation with people unable to get insurance, and those with insurance paying extra for those who receive only emergency care or walk out on their bills.

No such luck.

All I can surmise is that the right is in favour of the rich. Stick with me here. Every year fewer people have insurance. They cannot pay for health care services. While I am, as a doctor, always in favour of the least intervention as a first approach, there are many cases where major, immediate, medical intervention is necessary: major accidents, strokes, heart attacks, gunshot wounds, meningitis and other very quick infections, the list goes on. I'm guessing that they just want everyone who cannot afford the thousands a year that health insurance costs to just plain die.

They say that Single Payer will be a form of rationing. And in one sense they are correct: **EVERYTHING** is rationed. Think about it. If a doctor works 10 hours a day and can see 30 patients, his/her care is rationed to the 30 people who get those appointments. It's not just medicine. Want to buy a house in a new development with 30 houses? Those houses are rationed to the first 30 people who buy them, anyone else who wants one is out of luck. Want to own the Mona Lisa? Sorry, that's been rationed to the Louvre. The trick with health care is to get the best, most appropriate, care to the most number of people. Free-market has failed miserably at that. Single payer is the way to go.

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Yep (0.00 / 0)

That sounds about right for the Cato Institute. Lie in the face of facts and state it as god-given truth. Americans need to wake-up and refuse neoliberal groups' failed ideology any type of legitimacy.

by: [Dave](#) @ [Thu Jun 18, 2009 at 09:03:11 AM CDT](#)

great post (0.00 / 0)

my commute has changed and i don't listen to NPR as much in the mornings anymore, but I caught an interview they did with Sebelius and was pretty flabbergasted when they presented the public option as some sort of evil socialism asking "what measures are you going to take to make sure this doesn't end up as public healthcare?" The discourse on this topic is so skewed from best practices, rationality and concern for the well being of all Americans it's disgusting.

by: [sarah](#) @ [Thu Jun 18, 2009 at 09:45:13 AM CDT](#)

Bi-Partisanship and Health Care (0.00 / 0)

I've been thinking a lot about this, and while there are several roadblocks to real health care reform, one of the largest ones is the President's and congressional Democrat's fetish with bi-partisanship. Yes, I know the idea is a nice one, but it doesn't work. Never has, and never will. Not on an issue this important and, unfortunately, polarizing. It's time to stop with this consensus building and bi-partisan nonsense. Look, if Americans wanted bi-partisanship that badly, would we have elected 59 Democratic senators (counting Franken), increased the Democratic margin in the House, and elected a Democratic president with a landslide 365 EV's? I don't think so.

What Americans want, and what I want, is to get real things done, in health care, the environment, civil rights, without support from the right. President Obama might be a great

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person with great ideas, but his leadership style is turning a lot of progressives off. That said, I haven't given up on him yet, but this consensus building has to stop now. We cannot make concessions on health care just to get a few Republican votes.

But President Obama is not the only one to blame, it's the Democratic party, excluding Bernie Sanders in the Senate, or say the House Progressive Caucus. Republicans laugh in the face of bi-partisanship, it's time for Democrats to do the same.

"Is profit and greed the only conceit on a scale between mere prosperity and inhumanity? It may well be." -Bad Religion

by: [wecanhope08](#) @ Thu Jun 18, 2009 at 12:04:01 PM CDT

I want the pendulum stopped (0.00 / 0)

Look, if Americans wanted bi-partisanship that badly, would we have elected 59 Democratic senators (counting Franken), increased the Democratic margin in the House, and elected a Democratic president with a landslide 365 EV's? I don't think so.

I think large pendulum swings are really dangerous. If the right jams its agenda down the country's throat and then the left responds by doing the same when it gets power, then we end up in a cycle of instability and destruction. Stopping that pendulum is hard; it takes turning the other cheek a few times before it really starts to pay off.

Incidentally, I'd gladly have voted for a Republican who was willing to govern with maturity. Right now they're nearly all acting like idiots.

So was the Democratic wave a call to progressivism, a rejection of what conservatism has become, or an evaluation that Democrats look like the adults in the room? Some of all three, most likely. I respect the progressive wing of my party. Their voice is important, and they will bring a lot of good ideas to the table. And they should scream like hell when they feel that core principles are being betrayed.

But I don't think we should mistake the election as a mandate for progressive policies. Obama didn't run that way, and he's not governing that way. And that's one reason a lot of us voted for him.

by: [SarahLawrence Scott](#) @ Thu Jun 18, 2009 at 14:36:40 PM CDT

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