

TennCare, MassCare, and Keiki Care; Failed public health care options and the new American Dream

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With the country deeply divided over the issue of health care and how best to reform our system, it seems that several important elements are being left out of the debate.

There have been states that have tried a "public option" in conjunction with private health care that have been bitter failures.

- **TennCare** was instituted in Tennessee in 1994 and was supposed to keep health care costs down. Instead, businesses began dumping their employees into the public program as a cost saving measure for themselves. This took TennCare from \$2.5 billion in taxes all the way to over \$8 billion which threatened the fiscal stability of the entire state, and forced Governor Phil Bredesen in 2005 to cut 150,000 people out of the program, and reduce benefits for all that were left on the program. Now, citizens of Tennessee such as Patricia Newman have been aced out of medical care (in her case increased social security benefits placed her ineligible for public benefits). Patricia Newman will lose her life saving treatments as of August 11, 2009, and all TennCare can tell her is that she should "go into a nursing home." http://www.wzvt.com/newsroom/top_stories/wzvt_vid_1083.shtml So much for government being more compassionate than insurance companies themselves.
- **MassCare** was implemented by Governor Mitt Romney in 2006, and has been a terrible burden on the people of Massachusetts. State Treasurer Timothy Cahill said that MassCare was "expensive, even in good times. In tough times, it just doesn't seem doable." Since its implementation, public health care spending has gone up 42%, and expenditures for low to moderate income Massachusetts residents have doubled from \$630 million to \$1.3 billion in 2009. Massachusetts has dropped their uninsured percentage to 2.6%, which is why the program has a positive perception, but human beings are not just percentage points. Even though they have cut their uninsured percentage in half, the residents of Massachusetts can no more afford primary care now than they could in 2006, as those enrolled in the government option are still forced to use the ER at a rate 14% greater than those on private insurance. http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/columns/IrwinStelzer/Don_t-mimic-the-Massachusetts-Way-on-health-care-reform-7917580-49727752.html In an interview with Glenn Beck, Michael Cannon of the CATO Institute asserted that Massachusetts is FORCING people to pay over \$1 billion for insurance, whether they want it or not. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,534246,00.html> Clearly, Massachusetts has abandoned the principles of the founding of this nation, and has morphed into an oppressive and dominant form of governance. This is fine if states wish to destroy themselves, but we don't need the federal government abusing every state in this manner. If MassCare goes nation wide, Americans will have nowhere to go to find decent, affordable health care. As it stands, the residents of Massachusetts can move to other states to find what they need at lower costs, this is the concepts of federalism.
- **Keiki Care** was instituted in Hawaii in 2007, and was designed to cover 3,500 children that didn't have access to health care. Things don't go as planned when the government is at the helm, and 85% of children that ended up using Keiki Care had previously had private insurance. Parents saw the public option as a way to save money within their own families, (a rational decision) and immediately began dumping their private insurance in favor of the "free" public option. The state of Hawaii had teamed up with a large insurance company, and while this particular company became larger and richer, small insurance providers were aced out and suffered greatly thanks to Democrats instituting a big government, big business partnership in which they all get rich, and the average citizen suffers. The costs were so great in this instance, that the program had to be canceled within 7 months of its creation, thus leaving 3,500 Hawaiian children in the same predicament they were in less than a year earlier. The failed Hawaiian experiment proves that American time and money is being wasted as we kick around the idea of a public option. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,534750,00.html>

Above are three quick studies in the failures of government to administer "health care for all". We have been sold the false premise that the federal government can somehow dole out the complexities of health care to citizens from New York to L.A., yet we have seen that individual states cannot pull this off on even the smallest level.

Under a public option, many more people may be considered insured, but that says nothing of the quality of health care, or accessibility to doctors or specialists. In Tennessee, Massachusetts, and Hawaii, quality suffered, wait times increased, and health care practitioners have been spread thin, leading to an unsustainable kind of system. Why replace one unsustainable system with another? In fact, these systems could only be sustained provided a healthy private market existed. Yet, all three systems cannibalized themselves as people jumped from private to public, and politicians were forced to either cancel programs, cut benefits, remove people from the dole, or raise taxes.

For those that insist that the current reform will produce a "healthy competition" thus forcing prices down, consider the words of Barney Frank, Timothy Geithner, and Lawrence Summers.

- **Barney Frank July 27th 2009:** "I think, if we get a good public option, it can lead to a single payer system, that's the best way to reach single payer." <http://blog.beliefnet.com/reformedchicksblabbing/2009/07/barney-frank-admitting-the-pub.html>
- **Timothy Geithner and Lawrence Summers August 2nd, 2009 when asked about possible tax increases for the middle class:** "We have to bring these deficits down very dramatically. That's going to require some very hard choices." Lawrence Summers spoke in the same illusive manner saying, "There's alot that could happen over time." http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/2009/08/03/2009-08-03_no_new_taxes_maybe_geithner_econ_council_chief_wont_rule_out_hard_choices_inclu.html

Barney Frank proves that this reform is indeed a dark horse for a completely socialist (and consequently un-American) system. Geithner and Summers reveal that the promises of no new taxes for 95% of Americans under the Obama administration were either spoken due to incompetence, or the ability to tell a lie with a straight face.

The facts bear out that socialized medicine fails, and politicians cannot deliver on promises made. If the public option is instituted and people react the same as the residents of Tennessee, Massachusetts, and Hawaii have, we will be back at the bargaining table in just a few short years wondering just how we can get astronomical health care costs under control.

I should like to assume that only then will the American people finally reject the idea of the government discarding the Constitution, and demand that the government acts only within the boundaries prescribed by the Constitution. But just as the failures of government mandates and state run programs have caused this current debacle free from persecution, I can only assume that the American people will blame the government last, and endorse an ever increasing role for the government to play, until rationing boards ultimately decide who lives and who dies.

Compassion and efficiency do not exist in bureaucracy, however the belief that these things can be achieved in government is the new American Dream. Unlike the former American Dream where the individual could take control of his or her own life and succeed or fail based on the merits of his or her decisions and level of ambition, the new American Dream is unattainable and the bureaucracies therein are unsustainable.

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