



Obamacare Medicaid fight is a clash of visions

By: Brandon Dutcher – March 11, 2013

Even though Gov. Mary Fallin has said repeatedly she won't go along with the Obamacare Medicaid expansion, her detractors aren't taking no for an answer.

MoveOn.org, an advocacy group funded in part by the liberal billionaire (and Obama donor) George Soros, recently co-sponsored an Obamacare Medicaid rally at the state Capitol. The event was promoted by various members of Oklahoma's organized left. One donor even provided free bus travel for demonstrators traveling from Tulsa.

Oklahoma journalists — some in the “mainstream” media, others at Oklahoma Watch, a nonprofit organization which is part of a Soros-funded liberal news network — are also taking an interest, writing in-depth Medicaid-expansion stories.

Well, they're writing some stories, not others. Don't expect heart-wrenching profiles of low-income Oklahomans who have been harmed by a program that, as health-care researchers Avik Roy and Grace-Marie Turner point out, “has the worst health outcomes of any insurance program in the developed world.” Indeed, they say, “mountains of clinical literature show that, on average, patients on Medicaid have poorer health outcomes than those with no insurance at all.”

Nor are we seeing stories about how expanding this dysfunctional welfare program will serve to worsen the cycle of government dependence. Or stories about how Medicaid expansion will crowd out private health coverage. Or how it will raise premiums for Oklahomans with private health insurance.

No, the narrative framework is nonnegotiable: Expanding Medicaid is the “compassionate” thing to do.

And readers can always count on a go-to quote from one of the state's leading evangelists for Medicaid expansion, a state lawmaker often referred to simply as “an emergency room physician from Grove.” Because, heck, readers wouldn't be interested to know he's an emergency room physician in a government-subsidized corporate hospital with a vested financial interest in Medicaid expansion.

The hope is that Gov. Fallin might flip-flop. One liberal journalist posits that Leavitt Partners, a consulting firm hired to study Oklahoma's health-care options, could give Fallin cover to try to expand Medicaid.

That's not implausible. A July 21, 2012, New York Times article noted that Leavitt's firm

makes money by helping states prepare for the Obamacare Medicaid expansion. As one Cato Institute scholar warns, “Leavitt” is Republican for “Solyndra.”

Encouragingly, state health commissioner Terry Cline says that’s not in the cards. And, to her great credit, Gov. Fallin shows no signs of going wobbly. Besides, she doesn’t have the final word. As Roy reminds us, “it’s state legislatures that would have to approve the budgets that would fund the Medicaid expansion.”

In Oklahoma, where Obamacare is terribly unpopular (and will become even more so when our premiums spike in 2014), I’m not seeing a lot of enthusiasm among lawmakers to surrender on Medicaid expansion, which Roy calls “the most important battle against big government in the country today.”

Still, Oklahoma’s professional left — along with the crony capitalist/health-care-provider complex — will continue to agitate for Obamacare Medicaid expansion, just as they did for Obamacare itself.

The Washington Examiner’s Timothy P. Carney recently reported that in state capitals all across the country, chambers of commerce, hospitals, insurers and drug companies are “leaning on Republicans” to expand Medicaid.

“This is a familiar story,” he says. “Republicans tend to drop their opposition to big government when big business pushes them hard enough.”

Fortunately, Oklahoma’s conservative policymakers are having no part of it. Conservatives know that Obamacare is “a deadly threat to our economy, constitutional principles and institutions, and even character,” as OCPA distinguished fellow Andrew Spiropoulos put it.

“We will fight this pernicious scheme at every turn and for as long as it takes to dismantle it and begin the path to health care reforms that follow from, and do not flout, the principles of liberty.”