
# Ralph Nader: Health Care Hypocrisy

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About the only lesson Barack Obama has learned from the Hillary and Bill health insurance debacle of 1993-1994 is to leave Michelle Obama out of his current drive to get something—anything—through the Congress labeled "reform".

Otherwise, he is making the same mistakes of blurring his proposal, catering to right-wing Democrats and corporatist Republicans, who want an even mushier "reform" scam, and cutting deals with the drug, hospital, and health insurance industries.

His political opponents become bolder with each day as they see his party base in Congress weakening, his polls dropping, and a confused public being saturated with unrebutted propaganda by the insatiable profiteering, subsidized health care giants.

Their campaign-money-greased minions on Capitol Hill and the corporatist Think Tanks and columnists are seizing on President Obama's aversion to conflict and repeated willingness to water down what he will fight for.

The loud and cruel baying pack comes in the form of William Kristol ("This is not time to pull punches. Go for the kill."), Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC) ("If we're able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo. It will break him."), and Charles Krauthammer yammering wildly about medical malpractice and tort law. Krauthammer does not substantiate his claims or mention the many victims of malpractice as he gleefully predicts "Obamacare sinking."

All these critics have gold-plated health insurance, of course.

Hillary tried to appease the drug and hospital companies. Obama invites them to the White House, where they presumably pledged to give up nearly $300 billion dollars over ten years without any specifics about how this complex assurance can be policed.

No matter, in return Obama and his aides agreed not to press Congress to authorize the federal government to negotiate drug prices with the drug industry. Don't worry: the taxpayers will pay the bill.

At a meeting on July 7 at the White House between drug company executives, Obama's chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, and Senate Finance Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT), the industry, according to *The New York Times*, was promised that the final legislative package would not allow the reimportation of cheaper medicines from Canada or other countries even if they meet our drug safety standards.

Since these industry meetings at the White House are private, no one knows how many other concessions were made. What is known is that Barack Obama knows better. A former supporter of single payer health insurance (often described as full Medicare for all with free choice of physician and hospital and the elimination of hundreds of billions of dollars of corporate administrative costs and billing fraud), then-Illinois state senator Barack Obama predicted, in 2003, that it would be enacted once Congress and the White House were controlled by Democrats. Well, that is now the situation, but, as President, he believes single payer is not "practical".

Single payer health insurance is supported by a majority of the American people, majority of physicians and nurses, and nearly ninety members of the House of Representatives. (See H.R. 676 and singlepayeraction.org.)

A clear replacement of the private health insurance companies with federal insurance, as Medicare for the elderly did in 1965, allows for clear language. Twenty thousand people die in America each year because they cannot afford health insurance, according to the Institute of Medicine. Hundreds of thousands more suffer because they have no insurance to treat their diseases or injuries.

Single payer means everyone is covered from birth, as is the case now in every western nation. Imagine no lives lost or suffering due to no health insurance.

Fuzzy proposals, regularly altered and over-complicated due to the hordes of avaricious corporate lobbyists, make politicians like Obama very susceptible to lurid descriptions and lies by his vocal, well-insured opponents. Finally, the Obama people are using "health insurance reform", rather than the misnomer "health care reform" which opened them up to charges that government would take over health care. All proposals, including single payer, are based on private delivery of health care.

Now enters the well-insured libertarian Cato Institute with full-page ads in the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times* charging Obama with pursuing government-run health care. A picture of Uncle Sam pointing under the headline "Your New Doctor." Nonsense. The well-insured people at Cato should know better than to declare that this "government takeover" would "reduce health care quality."

About 100,000 lives are lost from medical-hospital negligence per year, according to the Harvard School of Public Health. This vast tragedy is hardly going to get worse under universal government health insurance that assembles data patterns to reduce waste, enhances quality, and transparency. By contrast, the secretive big health insurers who make more money the more they deny claims, ignore their loss prevention duties.

In 1950, when President Truman sent a universal health insurance bill to Congress, the American Medical Association (AMA) launched what was then a massive counterattack. The AMA claimed that government health insurance would lead to rationing of health care, higher prices, diminished choices and more bureaucracy. The AMA beat both Truman and the unions that were backing the legislation, using the phrase "socialized medicine" to scare the people.

Fifty-nine years later, "corporatized medicine" has produced all these consequences, along with stripping away the medical profession's independence. Today, the irony is that the corporate supremacists are accusing reformers in Washington of what they themselves have produced throughout the country. Rationing, higher prices, less choice, and mounds of paperwork and corporate red tape. Plus, fifty million people without any health insurance at all.

On Thursday, July 30, 2009, there will be a mass rally for a single payer system in Washington, DC. It is time to put what most Americans want on the table. (See www.Healthcare-Now.org for more information.)