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Driving the Conversation:

What is the most significant obstacle President Obama faces in achieving his proposed overhaul of the U.S. health care system?

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Roger Pilon, Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute:

“Most Americans are basically satisfied with the system we have”

You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time. That may be good enough for politics generally, as President Obama has demonstrated in spades. But when it comes to their health care, people tend to get serious. That’s what happened with ClintonCare. It’s already happening with ObamaCare.

As other Arena contributors have noted, therefore, the most serious obstacle Obama faces is that most Americans are basically satisfied with the system we have, with all its faults, especially when they consider the proposed alternatives. Medicare and Medicaid “succeed” only because they foist the true costs of service on to the private sector. Reduce the size of that sector, or impose ever greater costs on it, and we’re in a death spiral that can end only in a fully public system and the rationing of health care that afflicts every such system in the world. “Miracle drugs” we take for granted, for example, however expensive, are simply unavailable under many socialized systems. Obama may walk on water for the likes of Newsweek’s Evan Thomas – “he’s sort of God,” said Thomas after the Cairo speech – but not even God can amend the laws of economics.

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