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Thursday, August 20, 2009

Cato Institute: Sarah Palin is partly right



Sarah Palin ignited a firestorm when [she accused Obama](#) and Democrats of wanting to institute health care "death panels" in a post on [her facebook page](#). President [Obama tried to debunk the charge](#) at a town hall in Portsmouth, NH. Now, Michael F. Cannon, director of health policy studies at the Cato Institute, says [Palin is \(partly\) right](#).

[Detroit Free Press](#) reported:

The intelligentsia have been quick to dismiss former Alaska governor Sarah Palin's [claim](#) that, under President Obama's health plan, "my parents or my baby with Down Syndrome will have to stand in front of Obama's 'death panel' so his bureaucrats can decide...whether they are worthy of health care."

No one ever accused Palin of being a health policy expert, and many found her hyperbolic term "death panel" off-putting. But that should not distract voters from this reality: President Obama has proposed a new body that would enhance Medicare's ability to deny care to the elderly and disabled based on government bureaucrats' arbitrary valuations of those patients' lives.

It is right there in the legislation now before Congress, and it is called the Independent Medicare Advisory

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Council.

Medicare already has the statutory authority to reduce the amount it will spend on elderly and disabled patients, but largely cannot exercise that authority. Federal law says that Medicare may deny coverage for services that are not "reasonable and necessary," but gives no guidance on what "reasonable" and "necessary" mean. That effectively leaves the issue in the hands of the bureaucrats at the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

"In theory," writes Tufts Medical Center's Peter Neumann and colleagues, "the CMS could interpret Medicare's statutory authority to cover 'reasonable and necessary' services as a license to use cost-effectiveness analysis," i.e., to deny care. "To date," however, "this course has proved to be impossible."



Posted by Bluegrass Pundit at [8:00 PM](#)

Labels: [animal rights](#), [Cato Institute](#), [death panels](#), [Sarah Palin](#)

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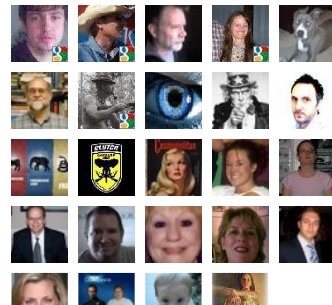
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▼ [2009 \(1093\)](#)

▼ [August \(122\)](#)

[Ted Kennedy: Hypocrite](#)
[Former Top Canadian](#)
[Dr. Brian Day: We have over a ...](#)
[Cato Institute: Sarah Palin is partly right](#)
["Drill, baby, drill," as long as it's Brazil](#)
[Obama: "...everybody in Washington gets all wee we..."](#)
[MSNBC tries to explain race-baiting gun segment](#)
[Video: Michelle Malkin on David Axelrod's conflic...](#)
[How CIA Director Leon Panetta kneecapped the CIA](#)
[MSNBC clips black man with assault rifle from town...](#)
[Advertiser's Boycott Boosting Glenn Beck's Rating...](#)
[Dealers dumping "Cash for Clunkers" program](#)
[The Democrats "Reconciliation" Bluff](#)
[Barney Frank Talks Down to Constituents at Town Ha...](#)
[Democrats drop illusion of bipartisanship on healt...](#)
[Democratic Rep. Anthony Weiner \(D-NY\) admits goal ...](#)
[Every state is now more conservative than liberal](#)
[Seniors quit AARP in droves over group's](#)

[support f...](#)

[Obama "Joker" Artist is Unmasked](#)

[Great Pawlenty Quotes from GOPAC Speech](#)

[Rep. Ben Chandler \(D-KY\) is missing](#)

[Video: "The Onion" Mocks Obama](#)

[New Republican Ad: Six Months Later and What Do Y...](#)

[What is Team Obama's Plan for ObamaCare Now?](#)

[Team Obama wants to resuscitate public-option](#)

[Leftists invoke "What would Jesus do?" to support ...](#)

[Tort reform would save money without hurting medic...](#)

[Entire New Hampshire Congressional Delegation MIA ...](#)

[Team Obama May Throw "Public Option" Under the Bus...](#)

[ObamaCare is dying and the finger pointing begins](#)

[Obama invokes grandmother's death to support Obama...](#)

[Saturday Open Thread](#)

[Who was on the front row for Rep. Sheila Jackson-L...](#)

[Angry Crowd Jeers Specter at Town Hall](#)

[Fifty-four Percent Prefer Nothing to Democrats Cur...](#)

[Obama's Big Problem
with ObamaCare](#)

[Video: Obama "the
Joker" Rehashes
Campaign Finance...](#)

[Pelosi Used to
love "Disruptors"](#)

[Lefty Campaign is
Getting Advertisers to
Pull Gle...](#)

[ObamaCare Quote of
the Day](#)

[America's Worst
Congressperson](#)

[Democrats Want Photo
ID for Town Halls, but
not Vo...](#)

[Conservatives
Launch "FLAG
YOURSELF!"
Campaign](#)

[Seventy-five percent
think Obama will
raise their ...](#)

[Harry Reid: Protesters
are 'evil-mongers'](#)

[President Obama's
Approval Hits New
Low](#)

[Obama accuses doctors
of wanting to hack off
body ...](#)

[Robert Gibbs
Gaffe: "Birthers" are
Right](#)

[ObamaCare Supporters
Pretend to be Doctors
at Town...](#)

[New study: Cap and
Tax to cost up to 2.4
million j...](#)

[ObamaCare supporters
Dupe Mainstream
Media](#)

[Fifty-two percent \(52%\)
now disapprove of](#)

[Obama](#)

[Team Obama Bussed In
Supporters For New
Hampshire ...](#)

[Obama Used Plants In
Health Care Town Hall](#)

[The Volt May Drain
GM's Battery](#)

[Obama Points to Failure
of Post Office to
Support ...](#)

[The Air Force is
Monitoring Twitter](#)

[Obama gets Booed at
Specter Town Hall](#)

[Obama's Plan to
Eliminate Private
Health Insurance...](#)

[Obama Promised He'd
Negotiate Health Care
Reform o...](#)

[AARP Members Revolt
Against ObamaCare](#)

[Michelle Malkin invokes
Hillary Clinton?](#)

[Father of Handicapped
Son Yells at Rep
Dingle and ...](#)

[Will the GOP's Next
Rising Star Emerge
From Libera...](#)

[Linda Douglass: The
Disinformation Czar](#)

[Even Voters In Liberal
Massachusetts Aren't
Buying...](#)

[Sarah Palin Carries
More Weight With
Virginia Vote...](#)

[Democrats Are Lying
About ObamaCare
Protesters Be...](#)

[California Demands
Businesses Pay Taxes
on Worthle...](#)

[GOP Congressman Tells
Constituents to Turn
Off Gle...](#)

[Another Cowardly
Democrat is Afraid to
Meet His Co...](#)

[SEIU: Goons and Thugs
for ObamaCare](#)

[Video: How to stack the
deck for a Town Hall](#)

[CBO torpedoed
ObamaCare again](#)

[New GOP
Ad: "Disinformation"](#)

[Hardball guest Cynthia
Tucker calls Town Hall
prot...](#)

[The National Guard is
recruiting Internment
Specia...](#)

[The CBO may have
underestimated the
cost of health...](#)

[Another Democrat
walks out on their
constituents a...](#)

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care is great? Watch
this.](#)

[Obama's team is now
unsure if Gitmo is
closing in ...](#)

[Obama the divider](#)

[Democrats are now
screaming at their
constituents ...](#)

[AARP Organizers Walk
Out on Meeting
Because Member...](#)

[Democrats Sneak Union
Supporters in
Handicapped Do...](#)

[It's official. The U.S. is
no longer engaged in
a ...](#)

[More Proof President](#)

[Obama Wants Single-payer Univ...](#)

[More Democratic](#)

[Congressmen Get Took to Task on Ob...](#)

[No Plants at Town Hall,](#)

[Just Local Citizens](#)

[More view Obama](#)

[Presidency a failure than Bush at ...](#)

[Nancy Pelosi Calls](#)

[ObamaCare Protesters "AstroTurf..](#)

.

[Congressman Chris](#)

[Carney's \(D\) Staff Disses Consti...](#)

[New RNC AD "In Denial"](#)

[Republicans Outsmart](#)

[DNC Gimmick](#)

[Priceless Video: Hoyer](#)

[Shouted Down by a Fellow De...](#)

[AP Admits Health Care](#)

[Bills Include Abortion Fundi...](#)

[Americans Want Tax](#)

[Cuts, Not New Health Care Spend...](#)

[Barbara Boxer Thinks](#)

[ObamaCare Protesters are "too...](#)

[Michelle Obama](#)

[Increased First Lady Staff by 30% i...](#)

[Democrat Ad Calls Town](#)

[Hall Protesters "Angry Mob"...](#)

[WH Spokesman Gibbs](#)

[declares Ahmadinejad is the ele...](#)

[White House claims](#)

[ObamaCare opponents are engagin...](#)

[Hoekstra: CIA
Interrogation
Techniques Worked](#)

[From
NotSoSure.org: "Testi
ng" Gov't Run Health
Car...](#)

[Durbin Accuses
ObamaCare
Opponents of
Attempting ...](#)

[Obama Honors Israel-
bashing Mary
Robinson With "Me...](#)

[Dick Morris: Democrats
Planning to Bypass
ObamaCar...](#)

[Rahm Emanuel:
Manipulating the
Mainstream Media](#)

[Glenn Beck vs. Stupid
Government Lawyers](#)

[CBS News Accuses
Conservative
Websites of Being
Be...](#)

[Video: Orly Taitz in
scream fest with
MSNBC anchor...](#)

[Tax revenues in severe
decline](#)

[New GOP AD Mocking
Dr. Obama \(video\)](#)

[Specter & Sebelius
Booted at Town Hall](#)

[Obama Wants to
Eliminate Private
Insurance \(video\)...](#)

[California Attorney Orly
Taitz Claims She Has
Obam...](#)

[Sunday Open Thread](#)

[Ordering a Pizza Under
ObamaCare \(video\)](#)

["Throw the Bums Out"](#)

[Cash for Clunkers is
Destroying Perfectly
Good Car...](#)

[Was Obama adopted by
Indonesian Citizen
Lolo Soeto...](#)

[Video Evidence:
Democratic Activists
Behind Palin ...](#)

[Americans finally
recognize Obama is
very liberal](#)

- ▶ [July \(177\)](#)
- ▶ [June \(170\)](#)
- ▶ [May \(169\)](#)
- ▶ [April \(154\)](#)
- ▶ [March \(127\)](#)
- ▶ [February \(95\)](#)
- ▶ [January \(79\)](#)
- ▶ [2008 \(93\)](#)

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