

# POLITICO

## Letter to the Editor

By: [Politico Readers](#)

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To the Editor:

Bob Dole, in his Opinion piece [“VA holds lessons for health care”](#) (POLITICO, April 4), writes about receiving wonderful health care from the Veterans Health Administration. And he is a good lobbyist for promoting his client McKesson’s collaboration with the VHA.

But not every veteran leaves the armed forces for a 35-year career in Congress — and a government-run health care system like the VHA is no model for health care reform.

A 2007 Newsweek [investigation](#) revealed what the VHA offers veterans who aren’t as well-connected as Dole: “a grim portrait of an overloaded bureaucracy cluttered with red tape; veterans having to wait weeks or months for mental-health care and other appointments; families sliding into debt as VA case managers study disability claims over many months,” and other deficiencies.

Politicians constantly [play games](#) with the VHA’s budget and veterans’ health care, which may be an unavoidable consequence of government-run health care.

True, the VHA is ahead of some – but not all – private health plans in health information technology. Yet that is mainly due to the federal government’s suppression of health plans that deliver electronic medical records.

As the author Philip Longman demonstrates in his book, “Best Care Anywhere,” it was pure dumb luck – not the VHA’s supposed superiority – that its electronic medical records system escaped death at the hands of the VHA bureaucracy, which seems to exist to quash such innovations.

Lawmakers who compare the VHA to what happens when government gets out of the way will find that better health care requires less government, not more.

*Michael F. Cannon*

*Director of Health Policy Studies*

*Cato Institute*

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