

Reno Hayek Symposium

Articulating conservative solutions to current issues & supporting their intelligent champions

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 - [Getting Started](#)
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Healthcare Crux: “Who Decides?” - Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute

Michael Tanner’s June 16th video conference at our monthly dinner was an excellent statement of the status, issues, bad ideas and needs for health care reform in America today. He characterized our current system as the best, the most innovative, flexible and costly in the world; like other areas of our consumption we have great choice but overspend and as a result have the highest quality available. When foreign leaders, magnates and celebrities have important health issues, they come to the US.

That said, there are problems: Our costs are double the average of the industrialized nations and a third higher than the next more expensive. Arguably we get what we pay for but that’s overly simplistic. Then there are the estimated 47 million uninsured; but numbers are fuzzy as there are questions of eligibility on 14 million and 10 million are non citizens. While 40% of the total is only temporarily uninsured only 15% is without insurance for two or more years. Finally, the quality of medical service is uneven; this is true regardless of insurance. Still even the uninsured receive 2/3 of the normal medical services.

So the goal is to solve or ameliorate the problems without losing the good aspects of our system. As you would guess bad solutions abound: Mandates either employer or individual either ignore economics, lock in an archaic tax based system, or are unenforceable. The so called public option really becomes and is perhaps intended to wind up as a single payer system.

But there are ideas or principals which will help, the “do no harm” concept preserving the best aspects of our superior system. Strive to switch to personal portable insurance by getting off the current employer provided tax free compensation. This is accomplished by taxing the insurance benefit and providing a deduction to the employee with the net result that the employee is the consumer with a portable policy. Insurance competition will be had by breaking down state barriers so that all qualified carriers can legally market insurance in all jurisdictions. And finally, more provider competition should be encouraged with the use of paramedical practitioners, midwives and the like.

Michael Tanner gave a telling analogy in summation: your pet dog doesn’t have much say in the level of treatment he gets at the vet! In other words, who decides?

Our group members thank Michael Tanner and the Cato Institute for a brilliant presentation. A password protected recording of the event will be available to our members on this website.

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