



Bradley Christie

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Congress should heed failures of state government-run health care

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As Congress deliberates health care plans over the next few months, the results of Massachusetts and Tennessee's attempts at government-run health care should give them pause. Both state's endeavors to reduce costs while providing greater coverage to more citizens have failed, largely due to the overwhelming costs associated with the programs. Simply stated, lowering health care costs while covering more uninsured individuals is pure fantasy.



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (AP file photo)

Back in 2006, Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney unveiled a plan that would mandate that every individual acquire health insurance. The plan was, of course, accompanied by huge government regulation and bureaucratic control and led to swelling costs. Michael D. Tanner, senior fellow with the Cato Institute, states, "Health care costs [in Massachusetts] continue to rise much faster than the national average . . . insurance premiums have increased by 8-10 percent per year, nearly double the national average." And that is exactly what we can expect from a similar option created by a much larger government. It is impossible to keep costs reasonable when President Obama and Congressional Democrats plan to add nearly 50 million uninsured individuals to the government rolls. Further, a government-run health care program will limit consumer choice, lead to rationing of care, and will result in the inevitable increase in taxes.

The Tennessee model, TennCare, has been fraught with problems also. Created in 1994 as a program similar to an HMO, the costs of this program started out at \$2.5 billion annually and by 2004 had grown to \$8 billion. "Our experience with trying to do universal coverage ended up being a disaster," said Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen. To account for these problems, fruitless attempts to impose a state income tax were made (Tennessee does not have one), and since then the state government has created new programs to try to find better solutions to health care. You can view the summarized timeline of the TennCare program here. As you can see, government inefficiency and mismanagement abound.

Conclusion

Governments are inherently inefficient, intrusive, and wasteful, as is exhibited in these two state models. As a nation, we should strive for less involvement from government in our health care industry instead of more.

Author: Bradley Christie



Bradley Christie is a National Examiner. You can see Bradley's articles on [Bradley's Home Page](#).

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