
Obama Recess Appoints Rationing Advocate Donald Berwick to Medicare Post

by **Steven Ertelt**

LifeNews.com Editor

July 7, 2010

[Email](#) [RSS](#) [Print](#)

Washington, DC (LifeNews.com) -- President Barack Obama used a recess appointment today to name rationing advocate Donald Berwick to become the director of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The office oversees government health care programs and that worries pro-life advocates because Berwick has praised British programs that ration care.

The position is important because it will oversee implementation of the massive government-run health care plan that pro-life advocates say will foster rationing and also contains taxpayer funding of abortions.

Berwick is an outspoken admirer of the British National Health Service and its rationing arm, the [National Institute for Clinical Effectiveness](#) (NICE).

During a 2008 speech to British physicians, Berwick said "I am romantic about the National Health Service. I love it," and calling it "generous, hopeful, confident, joyous, and just."

"It's unfortunate that at a time when our nation is facing enormous challenges, many in Congress have decided to delay critical nominations for political purposes," Obama said in a statement about the appointment.

"With more than 180 nominees still pending before the Senate, it's my hope that my colleagues in Congress will agree to put politics aside and move forward on these vitally important positions," he said.

But Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell blasted the recess appointment.

"As if shoving a trillion-dollar government takeover of healthcare down the throat of a disapproving American public wasn't enough, apparently the Obama administration intends to arrogantly circumvent the American people yet again by recess-appointing one of the most prominent advocates of rationed healthcare to implement their national plan," McConnell said.

McConnell criticized Democrats for not holding a confirmation hearing for Berwick and said they were avoiding the tough questions about the pro-abortion health care bill and its rationing components and Berwick's views on them.

He said, "Democrats haven't scheduled so much as a committee hearing for Donald Berwick, but the mere possibility of allowing the American people the opportunity to hear what he intends to do with their healthcare is evidently reason enough for this administration to sneak him through without public scrutiny."

Also, pro-life Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming called the move "an insult to the American people" that makes "a mockery of [Obama's] pledge to be accountable and transparent."

Recess appointees can serve in their position until the end of the congressional term following the year of their appointment. That means Berwick will hold the influential position until late 2011 unless the Senate officially approves his nomination before then.

Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, [wrote about the problems with Berwick](#) in an opinion column at the Daily Caller in May.

Recalling that opponents of the government-run health care bill were blasted for bringing up "death panels," Tanner writes: "But if President Obama wanted to keep a lid on that particular controversy, he just selected about the worst possible nominee."

In his comments lauding the British health care system, Tanner says "Berwick was referring to a British health care system where 750,000 patients are awaiting admission to NHS hospitals."

"The government's official target for diagnostic testing was a wait of no more than 18 weeks by 2008. The reality doesn't come close. The latest estimates suggest that for most specialties, only 30 to 50 percent of patients are treated within 18 weeks. For trauma and orthopedics patients, the figure is only 20 percent," he writes.

"Overall, more than half of British patients wait more than 18 weeks for care. Every year, 50,000 surgeries are canceled because patients become too sick on the waiting list to proceed," he continues.

"The one thing the NHS is good at is saving money. After all, it is far cheaper to let the sick die than to provide care," Tanner adds.

NICE is at the forefront of the rationing in the British health care system.

"It acts as a comparative-effectiveness tool for NHS, comparing various treatments and determining whether the benefits the patient receives, such as prolonged life, are cost-efficient for the government," Tanner explains. "NICE, however, is not simply a government agency that helps bureaucrats decide if one treatment is better than another. With the creation of NICE, the U.K. government has effectively put a dollar amount to how much a citizen's life is worth."

Tanner points out that Berwick has already admitted health care rationing is coming.

"It's not a question of whether we will ration care," the Obama nominee said in a magazine interview for Biotechnology Healthcare, "It is whether we will ration with our eyes open."

Liberal writer Nat [Hentoff has also criticized](#) Berwick's nomination.

Printed from: <http://www.lifenews.com/bio3127.html>