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## Health Plan Merits Argued at Forum

**By Sean Olson***Journal Staff Writer*

Both sides of the political spectrum found common ground in a health care debate in Albuquerque on Monday night, agreeing that the nation's health care system needs some serious work.

That's where the agreements ended for Cato Institute health care expert Michael Cannon and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees New Mexico political director Carter Bundy.

An audience of about 80, most of whom are against the Obama health care plan, heard arguments for both a government-run health care option from Bundy and a free-market approach from Cannon.

Cannon said government-run health care, even if only billed as an option next to private providers, would end up costing more than the government lets on. He said that through mandates placed on insurance companies through the government, the cost of care to everyone would go up and options would be limited.

"They are going to have to raise taxes and they are going to have to start denying services," Cannon said about the long-term prospects of a public option for health care.

Bundy said the free market approach won't work with health care, especially considering the incentives insurance companies have to deny claims for a higher profit margin.

"There are certain intrinsic qualities in insurance companies that make (a free market approach) impossible," Bundy said.

The debate was held in an auditorium at the Albuquerque Museum. It was sponsored by the Rio Grande Foundation, a conservative nonprofit and government watchdog organization. Rio Grande President Paul Gessing moderated the event.

Although passions have run high during health care forums across the U.S., the Monday night crowd was thanked by participants for remaining respectful and calm during the event.

Members of the crowd were drawn randomly to ask questions, many of them relating to the costs of creating and maintaining a public option for health care. Audience members also asked about the constitutionality of a public option and questioned the capability of a government to run a program efficiently.

Bundy stressed that Medicare, which he said is one of the more popular health care options available, could be taken as an example of why a public option could work.

Cannon said cutting down on state regulations on licensing, which would create a larger marketplace of private insurers, could lower costs and insure more people.

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