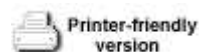


CNN Pushes Massachusetts 'Model' for Health Reform But Admits 'Rising Costs'

Jim Acosta fails to include critics in Romney Care story, brings up death panel rhetoric.

By Julia A. Seymour
Business & Media Institute
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CNN went searching for an example of health care reform without a public option on Aug. 20. Correspondent Jim Acosta found such a “[model](#)” in Massachusetts, but downplayed the state program’s flaws.

“What do you get when you take the public option out of health care reform? Well, according to some experts you get Romney Care,” Acosta said. “Three years after enacting its own version of reform, Massachusetts now has near universal coverage. Taxpayer watchdogs say it’s affordable ... health care experts say it’s popular.”

Acosta included former Gov. Mitt Romney, Michael Widmer of the Massachusetts Taxpayer Foundation and Robert Blendon of the Harvard School of Public Health in his segment -- all supporting Romney Care.

But the experts’ background wasn’t mentioned in the report. Acosta identified Widmer as a “taxpayer watchdog,” without mentioning that he worked for Democratic Gov. Michael [Dukakis](#) in the 1970s. Blendon was identified as a “health care expert,” but there was nothing about the fact that he has co-directed a project for National Public Radio and the Henry J. [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) (a liberal group) and has given several campaign [donations](#) to Democrats including Sen. Edward Kennedy, Committee for a Democratic Majority, John Kerry, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and five separate donations to the DNC.



CNN also took a cheap shot at former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, asking Romney if “you think it’s OK for the governor of Alaska to be talking about death panels.”

Acosta didn’t include anyone critical of the Massachusetts health care plan and buried his own admission of “problems” until the end of the segment, saying, “Now the Massachusetts model does have its problems, it does not control rising health care costs – something Romney says has to be tackled on a national level.”

Roberts replied by pointing out that cost control is “the centerpiece of health care reform.”

Michael Tanner of Cato Institute wrote a briefing paper in June pointing out a number of problems with the Massachusetts program and warned that the “[true lesson](#)” of Massachusetts is that “giving the government greater control over our health care system will have grave consequences for taxpayers, providers, and health care consumers.”

According to Tanner, health care costs in Massachusetts “continue to rise much faster than the national average.” Insurance premiums alone increased by 8-10 percent per year, “nearly double” the national rate. Other problems include huge deficits for the program and increased wait times for doctors.

Acosta's report was another example of the failure of reporters to critically examine the Massachusetts plan in health care reform stories during the first six months of 2009. The Business & Media Institute recent Special Report [UnCritical Condition](#) found that even with much discussion of health care, only one ABC, CBS or NBC story mentioned Massachusetts – and that story featured Romney praising his state's efforts.

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