

Opinion: Obama's Health Care Myths Exposed

(March 17) — President Barack Obama is flying Air Force One from staged pep rally to staged pep rally, whipping his left-wing base into something approaching frenzy over his health care plan.

That would be fine if he and his allies weren't peddling so many myths about how that legislation would affect ordinary Americans.

Myth: This legislation won't cut Medicare.

Reductions in Medicare outlays finance about half of the legislation's \$1 trillion in new entitlement spending. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office verifies that the legislation would reduce Medicare benefits. President Obama's top Medicare actuary verifies that it would reduce access to care for Medicare beneficiaries.

Of course, Congress *needs* to restrain Medicare spending. Otherwise, income-tax rates would have to double by midcentury. But the solution is to make Medicare more efficient, not to use price controls and bureaucratic rationing.

Myth: The legislation would contain health care costs.

The Obama plan would increase health care costs for the simple reason that it

would put millions more patients, plus doctors and insurers, in a position where they are spending the taxpayers' money. That never produces frugality.

Its command-and-control approaches to cost containment have failed over and over in Medicare and Medicaid because they don't change the incentives that encourage cost growth.

The only provision that would change incentives is the president's proposed tax on the sick and others with high-cost health plans. But he appears ready to abandon that, anyway.

Stanford health economist Alain Enthoven writes, "The American people are being deceived." The Senate bill would "do little or nothing to curb [health care] expenditures."

Myth: This legislation is a moral imperative.

The Obama plan would impose additional taxes on the sick — in part, to subsidize abortions — and would threaten people with jail time if they do not purchase health insurance. Where's the morality in that?

Myth: This legislation is about saving lives.

Congress could save more lives with less money by creating smaller programs that fight high blood pressure, diabetes and other specific ailments.

By expanding health insurance instead, Democrats are implicitly showing that saving lives isn't the primary goal.

Myth: This legislation would stop abusive insurance practices.

The Obama plan would encourage abusive insurance practices. Research by Obama adviser David Cutler shows that the plan's price controls would force insurers who provide quality care for the sick into bankruptcy. Insurers would therefore use countless and covert means to deny care and avoid, mistreat and dump the sick.

Along the way, the legislation would shower private insurance companies with half a trillion dollars in government subsidies.

Myth: The public wants this legislation.

Polls that ask whether respondents like the legislation's supposed benefits (e.g., reduced insurance premiums for the sick) without asking about the corresponding costs (higher premiums for the healthy, insurers denying care to the sick) are meaningless.

The public has consistently expressed its intense opposition to the Obama plan for eight solid months. Democratic pollsters Pat Caddell and Doug Schoen note that

“four-fifths of those who oppose the plan strongly oppose it ... while only half of those who support the plan do so strongly.” A small, radical, left-wing minority is foisting this legislation on an unwilling public.

Myth: This isn't a government takeover of health care.

This legislation would force all Americans to purchase health insurance coverage. Government would control what kind of insurance you purchase, where you purchase it, how much you pay and what kind of medical care you receive. Our health care sector would be “private” in name only.

Once government controls those decisions, there will be nothing left to socialize. Make no mistake — this is a vote on socialized medicine.

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