

What's the Future of the Public Option?

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As President Obama's top advisers made the rounds on Sunday morning talk shows yesterday, the newest health care question appears to be whether the White House will continue fighting for a public option.

Rahm Emanuel, the president's chief of staff, [told John Dickerson yesterday on Face the Nation](#) that a public option is important to Mr. Obama, but "it doesn't define the entire process of health care." Similar messages were also delivered by advisers David Axelrod on ABC's "This Week" and Valerie Jarrett on NBC's "Meet the Press."

As Obama continues health care negotiations, the Cato Institute's Michael Cannon and Center for American Progress' Jennifer Palmieri joined Sharyl Attkisson on "Washington Unplugged" today to debate the future of a public health care option.

The Center for American Progress supports a public option, but Palmieri agreed with Emanuel saying it isn't crucial.

"We think the most important principle is that you put cost controls in place so that eventually costs will go down...and that people get more coverage," Palmieri said, adding that a public insurance plan "may help do that."

On the other hand, Cannon said that the problem with a public option is that "the government can't really compete on a level playing field with private insurance."

Because of this, he said the government will "subsidize its own plan, heap costs on private insurers" and eventually drive them out of business.

The panelists also discussed who would be affected by a public option and made predictions on what to expect in the final legislation.

Watch the show above, which includes the full debate and a piece by CBS News' John Bentley on the hotly-contested campaign for governor in New Jersey.

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