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## Finley: Oily health bill fails to build trust

*NOLAN FINLEY*

Trust is about the only thing left out of the bloated health care bill narrowly passed by the House.

Americans remain wary of the plan, according to polling, because they don't trust it will do the things President Barack Obama claims it will do, and won't do the things he promises it won't.

Despite the president's "Don't worry, trust me" assurances that the reforms will deliver universal coverage with superior care and at a lower cost without disrupting current coverage, more than half of Americans aren't buying -- and it's not because they're frightened by Republican hainty tales. They know what snake oil smells like.

They don't trust the cost estimates, and for good reason. Taxpayers are being asked to swallow the incredible claim that the cost of the bill will be offset by savings gained from efficiencies and taxes on the wealthy. But as the Wall Street Journal notes, even confiscating 100 percent of the income of the truly rich won't raise enough revenue to pay for this bill. And the New York Times reports most analysts say the savings estimates are unachievable.

Big shock. Americans know this drill. In 1965, Medicare Part A was estimated to cost the nation \$9 billion by 1990. Actual cost: \$67 billion, according to the Cato Institute.

Similarly, in 1988, when a home health care benefit was added to Medicare, the cost was pegged at \$4 billion. Actual: \$10 billion. And the Medicare Part D drug benefit doubled in cost in the time it took to move from Congress to the president's desk.

Americans are also too familiar with how the federal bureaucracy works to trust that government management of care won't mean more hassles and hardship. Most Americans have had at least some contact with bureaucrats, and it's rarely pleasant. The House bill will increase the frequency and intensity of those contacts.

It sets up panels to dictate what procedures will be covered, panels to choose who can deliver the care, and panels to decide whether the treatment is necessary.

Americans are asked to trust the bureaucracy to be competent and compassionate at a time when competence and compassion can mean the difference between life and death.

Anyway they turn this bill, it still comes up looking like a first step to a federal takeover of health care.

That speaks to the widest gap in trust -- the bill's motives. The expressed goal is to make affordable insurance available to all. But much of what's in the bill reaches well beyond that mission, raising suspicions that the real objectives are to increase the dominance of government over the individual and use health care as a means of achieving a broader liberal agenda.

For example, the bill is laden with affirmative action requirements in health care education and hiring. A Senate version requires the government to "develop standards for the measurement of gender" because simple male and female checkboxes are no longer relevant.

It also requires restaurant chains to disclose caloric content and other nutritional information on menus. And it

sets up home visits by federal health monitors to assess the household behaviors of certain families with young children.

Americans don't trust this bill because its sponsors have not been honest about its cost, impact and intent. To stop it, they'll have to do more than gripe to pollsters. They must start hollering at politicians again.

Because another thing they can't trust is that their members of Congress will vote on their behalf, rather than how they're told to by their partisan bosses.

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