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IBD EDITORIALS

## Lawmakers Are Elected To Serve, Not To Dehumanize And Demean

By KERRY JACKSON

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Two hundred twenty U.S. lawmakers voted late Saturday night for a federal takeover of the American health care sector. They had no right.

Passage of the 1,990-page bill is a national disgrace. Agitators say it's a shame that the government in the world's wealthiest country doesn't provide health care for all. But the real blemish on this nation is a political party pushing the U.S. ever closer to being a nation of dependents.

Congress has no constitutional authority, no moral standing to force a federal health care system on a people whose nation-founding forefathers promised them they'd be free of government coercion — not even if a wide majority was demanding it.

### Dignity Stolen

Those 220 lawmakers abused the nation's trust in them. They performed an intellectually and morally corrupt act. They forgot that they are public servants, not masters of the citizenry. They have elevated the soft tyranny of invasive government over the freedom that is the hallmark of this nation, the legacy of the founders who understood the dangers of a state acting with no limits.

Should the House bill ever become law, it would, like all socialist policies, dehumanize and demean. Socialism, statism, collectivism, communism — they're all varying degrees of cruel regimes that crush the human spirit and drain the soul. In systems in which the individual is forced to yield to the collective, the individual loses his humanity, his hope and his dignity.

### Desperate To Escape

Writing Saturday in the American, a publication of the American Enterprise Institute, Marian L. Tupy, a Cato Institute policy analyst who recalls from his childhood the empty shelves in communist bloc nations, provides a clear picture of the grim conditions that follow state subjugation of the individual.

"If it is hard to describe the economic wasteland of Russia to someone who hasn't been there, it is even harder to describe what their totalitarian system has done to the human spirit," Tupy wrote.

"It isn't just the drabness and grayness one sees everywhere. Or the rudeness and surliness one encounters so often. It's that you virtually never see people laughing, smiling, or just seeming to enjoy themselves. People seem to walk slightly bent over, their eyes always averting a stranger. There is an overwhelming sense of oppression and depression."

Socialism is so demoralizing that thousands have risked — and lost — their lives to escape it. As many as 78,000 Cubans, many of them murdered, have died at sea while trying to find freedom in the U.S. Roughly 1,000 people driven to the edge by Soviet oppression were killed like rats between 1961 and 1989 while seeking to cross from the smothering communism of East Germany into the liberty of West Berlin.

Giving in to the notion of health care reform may not send us immediately or even ultimately into a downward spiral that brings the harsh totalitarianism that characterizes communist regimes. But we should not be shy about warning of the humiliating effects of collectivist policies.

Calm voices say there's no reason to be troubled by the House vote, that the Senate is the graveyard in which the Democrats' health care

reform will be buried. But such conventional wisdom doesn't always translate well into reality. There are 58 Democrats in the Senate and all but a few are committed to giving President Obama another legislative victory like Saturday's.

### Setting A Precedent

The House vote is also significant in that it made a material impact on the political conversation. For the first time, a lawmaking chamber in this country has given clear support to a health care system owned and managed by the federal government. It has made future incursions into private lives that much easier.

Already, the federal government alone controls 28% of the economy. If it were to successfully take over the health care sector, it would control more than 35% of GDP. Do we really want Washington to have such dominion over the private sector?

No, it has no right, and it's better for the public to realize this now than to finally comprehend it later when it's too late.

- Jackson has written most of IBD's editorials on health care over the last 10 years.

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