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## Obama's Imaginary Consensus

By [David Harsanyi](#)

President Barack Obama grimly warned America this week that if his health care plans fail, the nation will go "bankrupt."

Sure, adding another trillion-dollar entitlement program to our \$12 trillion of debt may seem like a counterintuitive way to stave off economic ruin, but who are we to argue? The president's got smarts.

And as is the case with so many issues, Obama adorned his rhetoric with sharp warnings of calamity should he fail, fabricated consensus to buttress his case and a promise of rapture should he succeed.

You'll remember it was Obama who cautioned that failure to pass the stimulus boondoggle would "turn a crisis into a catastrophe." He claimed that a failure to act on cap and trade will lead us to "irreversible catastrophe" and that a failure to pass a government-run health care system will mean "more Americans dying every day."

It's like living the Old Testament. Scary.

Holy burning bushes! Did you know that everyone -- and I mean everyone -- agrees with the president? Obama stressed this week that you can "talk to every health care economist out there and they will tell you that ... whatever ideas exist in terms of bending the cost curve and starting to reduce costs for families, businesses and government, those elements are in this bill."

Not "some" or "most" or "Peter Orszag on a two-day bender" but "every" health care economist in the entire world would tell you as much.

This sort of exaggeration reminds us of another whopper the president unloaded. While promoting the stimulus plan in January, he claimed that "there is no disagreement that we need action by our government, a recovery plan that will help to jump-start the economy."

No disagreement *whatsoever* ... until the Cato Institute found 200 economists from major universities across the country who did have a disagreement -- and judging from the stimulus plan's impressive impotence, perhaps Obama should have lent them an ear.

So when Obama says that "whatever ideas exist" to help with cost are featured in the health care bills, let's chalk it up to his propensity to exaggerate, embellish or worse.

What about re-importation of pharmaceuticals developed and manufactured in the United States -- available

now more cheaply abroad? Is that an idea that exists? (Drug companies, a group that Obama regularly condemned before cutting a sweetheart deal, made sure that idea was DOA.)

What about balancing tax codes so that those with employee-provided health insurance and those with individual health insurance can benefit from the same benefits? Does that idea exist? You don't even need a staff of researchers to find economists who say it does.

What about opening up health insurance markets beyond state lines to create competition and more access? What about tort reform to end frivolous lawsuits? What about expanding health savings and flex accounts instead of killing them?

Let's concede that there might be a number of ideas -- both on the left and the right -- that haven't been embraced. Still, the most misleading assertion of the president is that his focus is on bending the cost curve in the right direction -- or that it's even a goal. The prevailing objective of health care "reform" has been to expand coverage to the uninsured and to throw federal control on everyone. Cost has proved to be largely irrelevant -- other than being a political consideration.

Of course, ignoring the substantive ideas of the ideological opposition is not, in and of itself, new for presidents or politicians. But Obama's fondness for creating imaginary consensus and offering false choices to the American people has been something to behold.

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