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Republicans May Target Pro-Rationing Obama Pick for Medicare, Medicaid Post

by Steven Ertelt

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Washington, DC (LifeNews.com) – Senate Republicans may roll out a campaign against the nomination of a rationing advocate to an influential government position.

They appear poised to strenuously oppose Dr. [Donald Berwick](#) in his bid to become the director of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the office that oversees government health care programs.

LifeNews.com has already outlined the fact that Berwick is an outspoken admirer of the British National Health Service and its rationing arm, the [National Institute for Clinical Effectiveness](#) (NICE).

Berwick has called Britain's National Health Service "one of the greatest health care institutions in human history" and "a global treasure" and said it sets an "example" for the United States to follow.

That's a recipe for opposition from Republicans, most of whom are pro-life and oppose the kind of rationing in Canada and England that leads to the denial of treatment and waiting lists resulting in the deaths of patients.

Texas Sen. John Cornyn told Politico that Republicans may launch a concerted attack on Berwick's nomination as a way of raising the ugly specter of the pro-abortion health care bill Obama signed into law.

"He is, as far as I am concerned, bad news," the pro-life lawmaker said. "If he wants to turn America into the National Health Service in England — he thinks that is the model — he is going to find a lot of pushback."

Politico indicates Democratic senators are telling White House officials they need to be prepared for a vigorous attack.

Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, who is pro-abortion, told Politico: "I have warned them specifically to be prepared. It looks like the Republicans are gunning for this guy, and I hope you have yourself prepared to defend him. He has a wonderful story to tell that Americans would be very proud of if they knew it."

Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, wrote more about the problems with Berwick in an opinion column at the Daily Caller.

Recalling that opponents of the government-run health care bill were blasted for bringing up "death panels," Tanner writes: "But if President Obama wanted to keep a lid on that particular controversy, he just selected about the worst possible nominee."

In his comments lauding the British health care system, Tanner says "Berwick was referring to a British health care system where 750,000 patients are awaiting admission to NHS hospitals."

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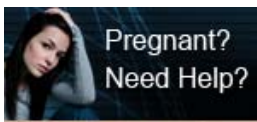
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"The government's official target for diagnostic testing was a wait of no more than 18 weeks by 2008. The reality doesn't come close. The latest estimates suggest that for most specialties, only 30 to 50 percent of patients are treated within 18 weeks. For trauma and orthopedics patients, the figure is only 20 percent," he writes.

"Overall, more than half of British patients wait more than 18 weeks for care. Every year, 50,000 surgeries are canceled because patients become too sick on the waiting list to proceed," he continues.

"The one thing the NHS is good at is saving money. After all, it is far cheaper to let the sick die than to provide care," Tanner adds.



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