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The Big Question: Should liberals scuttle Senate health deal?

By Sydelle Moore - 12/16/09 10:40 AM ET

Some of the nation's top political commentators, legislators and intellectuals offer some insight into the biggest question burning up the blogosphere today.

Today's question:

Howard Dean said yesterday that "the best thing to do right now is kill the Senate [healthcare] bill ... "

Will liberals in Congress take Dean's advice? Should they?

Brian Katulis, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, said:

Liberals aren't likely to follow Howard Dean's advice as a whole — some will, some won't, and in the end something that is less than half of a loaf will pass. People will forget what the months of debate were all about, and the media will help the Obama administration trumpet its first year in office successes. If liberals in Congress wanted to stand for something, then they could at least stand by their own words — but I don't see that happening in any organized fashion anytime soon.

Michael Cannon, director of Health Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, said:

Now that the “public option” is dead, both the Left and the Right should be able to agree: the Senate bill is nothing but a \$450 billion bailout of the private insurance companies.

In fact, the bailout may be several multiples of that figure.

That \$450 billion just represents checks that the Treasury would write to private insurance companies. The Reid bill would also force nearly every U.S. citizen to fork over cash to the private insurance companies — no matter how lousy a deal they offer. A recent CBO memo reveals that Reid has been meticulously working behind closed doors to conceal the full cost of his private-insurer bailout.

The Left and the Right should insist that Reid produce a complete CBO score that reveals the full cost of his bill's private-insurer bailout — in particular, the cost of the individual and employer mandates.

Left-wing Democrats will follow their own consciences when deciding how to vote. But they should force Reid to be honest about what he's asking them to swallow.

Craig Newmark, founder of Craigslist, said:

There's a lot of suffering out here, including people who lack healthcare coverage, lots more every day.

People of good conscience are working together to get the best deal for reform, it's all hands on deck.

I'd like to remind all Senators, in particular, to vote their conscience, to relieve the suffering of many. Put the country first.

Justin Raimondo, editorial director for Antiwar.com, said:

They won't take his advice, but they should. Once Americans find out that they have to buy health insurance, and will be fined for not doing so, they will expect some compensating benefit. When they find out there's none, they are going to be extremely pissed off. And then the 2010 backlash is going to be even bigger than it might already be.

John F. McManus, president of the John Birch Society, said:

The advice given the Senate by Howard Dean is precisely what should be done. The healthcare bill is a monstrous piece of legislation that is unconstitutional, hugely expensive, and remarkably threatening to the best healthcare system in the world. While the recommendation given by Dean is surprising coming from him, let's remember that a stopped clock registers the correct time twice each day. He's correct in this instance and his recommendation should be acted upon favorably.

Michelle D. Bernard, president & CEO of the Independent Women's Forum, said:

Liberals Will Ignore Dean and Trust that Government Will Expand on its Own

A growing number of liberals seem to have accepted the idea that passing a health care reform bill — no matter what's in it and what's not — is their top, indeed their only, priority. Let's face it, no one knows what's in the latest iteration of the Senate legislation, and even if all is revealed soon, there is hardly enough time for Senators to consider seriously the many consequences, intended and unintended, of the provisions in this two thousand plus page legislation.

Liberals who previously had suggested that they might not support a bill that didn't contain a “public option” or an equivalent seem to have decided that it's best to pass this monstrosity and trust that its regulations and mandates will further cripple private insurance and increase public support for a single payer system. And that may be a sound strategy for them, even if it's disastrous for the American public.

Liberals should listen to Howard Dean. This hastily crafted bill (which is increasingly a patchwork of political favors cobbled together with the one goal of buying 60 votes) should be recognized as a mistake regardless of your ideology.