

There Is Only One Solution To Health Care Reform

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The current versions of health care reform being proposed and debated are really starting to make me wonder. We started off with "making the system better", "outcomes", "efficacy", and "coverage for all". Now we're talking about something that is becoming increasingly far-removed from that. And it's getting worse.

We're now being told - in the latest iteration of legislation - that there will only be coverage for part of the population (current estimate: 93%). We're being told that tort reform has to be a significant factor in health care reform - yet in states in which it has occurred, there have been no savings to the patient. We're being told that the patient will be forced to buy health insurance - in a system that has not inherently changed. It's like taking your beat-up 1972 Ford Pinto into the shop for a quick coat of spray paint, thinking that might get you a few extra years of driving - but never looking at the oil leak or the old tires. Or the product recall.

The debate now is about protecting the status quo - and has become misguided to say the least, and unethical to say the most. But fortunately, it should now become readily apparent that there is but one solution to health care reform debate.

It's name? Legislative reform.

Yes, it will require some basic changes to how we do business in Washington - and at the state level as well.

The debates raging over health care reform have been good for this country and it's legislative process. Why? Yes, it has brought attention to the real health care issues facing the country. But perhaps more importantly - and perhaps written between the lines of the "debate" - it has brought to our attention the problems inherent to the currently-acceptable legislative systems in place. It has made the dirty underbelly of politics highly visible in a realm that does indeed affect all of us.

Health care reform has been a great example of dollars and cents. It is a topic in which there are some very big players, and some very big potential winners and losers. In the reform debate we have Big Pharma, Big Medicine, and Big Insurance - among others. And they all have their hands in the pockets of our legislators. It doesn't take much more than a cursory investigation online to see this. As but one example, you might consider the top 10 campaign contributors of Senator Max Baucus. And while you're at it, consider that the New England Journal of Medicine has recently reported that "if current trends continue, the health sector is likely to spend more than a half-billion dollars on lobbying in 2009". Yes, that would be \$500 million - almost \$1.4 million PER DAY on health sector lobbying alone.

With that in mind, there is but one solution to health care reform - and that is legislative reform. There is an inherent conflict of interest involved in the action of receiving dollars from a lobbyist. By eliminating lobbyist dollars, it would force our legislators to - heaven forbid - make decisions based not on political careers or lobbyist interests but on - their constituents. Along with this, the constituents have a responsibility as well - to know the issues, and to get out to vote when their representatives are no longer representing them appropriately. Constituents have to be responsible to change the situation when elected officials no longer represent the best interests of the group.

Now, imagine if you will for a moment, a health care debate in which those sitting at the table were truly invested in their constituents, and not in appeasing the dollars behind Big Pharma, or Big Medicine, or Big Insurance. I have absolutely no doubt that the answers to the problems would address both payment and cost, efficacy and outcome, and getting "more bang for the buck" - just like any other sector of industry in this country. Legislators would be attending to the needs of the consumer. And that unto itself would go a long way to solving this health care reform mess we now face.
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