

What's Your Opinion - Health Care

Dear AOA:

As an apartment owner in Los Angeles, I am strongly in favor of health care reform (the current system stinks) and think the business community will benefit from a Single Payer system. Let government, not employers or business owners, take care of health care. Businesses should be in business to make money, not to provide health care for their employees. *Sincerely, C. Turner*

Dear AOA,

It's a NO on the "health care". It appears the plan is to run with it and no one even knows any details. What will be the end result? Bad for business, bad for doctors and worse of all not good for any of us. We don't need tunnel vision. Keep up the opinions. *Ellie*

The below was written by Michael D. Tanner, a Cato scholar, who heads research into a variety of domestic policies, with a particular emphasis on health care reform, social welfare policy and Social Security. He is the author of several books, including Healthy Competition: What's Holding Back Health Care and How to Free It.

Q: You've been quite active in op-ed pages throughout the summer. What is the key message you're trying to get across regarding Obama's health care proposals?

A: It is important that people understand what the president and Congress are actually proposing, and the threat it poses to both our liberty and the quality of health care. It is sometimes hard to cut through all the conflicting numbers and terminology about "bending the curve" and "pooling mechanisms." Making matters even worse, some of the spin coming from the administration has been misleading, to put it mildly. For example, despite President Obama's repeated claims, you would not be able to keep your current insurance policy.

In my commentaries and op-eds, I've tried to cut through all that and explain – in plain language – what is actually being discussed. In the end, [the American people need to understand that under the reform plans currently making their way through Congress, they will pay more, both in terms of higher taxes and in high premiums, and receive poorer quality health in return.]

Q: The White House has signaled that it's willing to back away from a public option. Does this mean we can breathe a sigh of relief?

A: It's much too early to assume that the final bill won't have a public option. The politicians have made it clear that they consider a public option the lodestone of any reform bill. And, it's understandable why. Their goal has always been a Canadian-style single-payer system. President Obama said during the campaign that he would prefer one if he thought it could be achieved politically. The so-called public option, really a government-run plan, is the fastest route to such a system. Estimates suggest that as many as 89.5 million Americans would be duped into the government plan initially. That

would make the private insurance market unviable and lead to a complete government takeover.

We should also be aware of so called co-ops as an alternative to the public option. These wouldn't be true co-ops. The members wouldn't choose its officers – the president would. Plus, the secretary of Health and Human Services would have to approve its business plan, and thus could force it to offer whatever benefits, premiums and reimbursement schedules Washington wants. Finally, the federal government would provide start-up, and possibly ongoing, subsidies. A “co-op” run by the federal government, under rules imposed by the government and with federal funding, is simply government-run health insurance by another name. Or, as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid put it, “We’re going to have some type of public option, call it ‘co-op’, call it what you want.

Q: The debate around health care has become heated and often angry. What has been the response to your op-eds and from people you’ve spoken with about Cato’s position on reform?

A: Most of my letters and e-mail are surprisingly thoughtful. Even those who disagree with me often ask substantive questions or raise important issues. I try to respond to as many as possible. And, interestingly, most of my mail has been supportive. This is one issue where the American people are ahead of the politicians. I’ve been through the Hillarycare debate of 1993 and George W. Bush’s push for Social Security reform. It’s given me a pretty good feel for the public mood. I think the opposition to Obamacare is widespread and intensely felt.

Tanner’s writings have appeared in nearly every major American newspaper including the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal and USA Today. Reprinted with permission of the Cato Institute.