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Health Care in America: The Real Problem.

The fundamental problem with America's health care system is not over or under regulation; it is not greedy employers unwilling to pay full coverage for employees; nor is it the free market approach. The real problem is the cost associated with providing the best health care available. I am sorry to say, this problem is unsolvable. As long as medical/biomedical research continues, which it inevitably will, new procedures, drugs, and medical equipment will be innovated at a cost that the firm initializing the research thinks it can afford to pay based on the prospect of future earnings potential.

Health care costs are not going to fall in the foreseeable future.

The national spending for hospital care in 2001 was \$451 billion, up \$84 billion since 1997, according to a Pricewaterhousecoopers study. The study details the growth drivers behind recent increases in hospital spending. The largest driver being an increase in volume; more people are using more services. Two scary facts that add to our conundrum: Baby boomers are beginning to look at retirement and women are now averaging 2.1 children per lifetime as opposed to 1.7 throughout the 1970's and 1980's according to a Christian Science Monitor study. These facts help to push the \$451 billion figure to unimaginable heights in the next century.

The average cost to develop a single prescription drug is \$897 million according to The Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development. Drug companies need to charge enough per pill to fund their research, otherwise their out of business not innovating any drugs. Try to imagine the yearly cost for a single senior citizen who takes a dozen or more pills per day to help combat illnesses. The healthier we want to keep that citizen, the more money it will cost.

I cite these figures not to predict that our health care system is doomed, but to detail the real health care issue, cost.

Liberal pundits around the country continue to attack our current health care system citing lame arguments like employers are not willing to pay for their employees, or the federal government is over regulating the industry, or the republican lawmakers are sucking up to "big business". Tragically, they miss the point entirely.

Dave Zweifel takes a shot at Wisconsin State Representative Frank Lasee of Bellevue and writes in his column in The Capitol Times: "Here in Wisconsin, state Rep. Frank Lasee, a Republican who hails from the Appleton area, penned an op-ed piece in the State Journal the other day in which he dragged up that old canard, "socialized medicine" - aimed, of course, at scaring Americans into repulsion." He is arguing for socialized medicine... why fight it Dave? He goes on: "Predictably, those who are profiting the most from our broken system and their lackeys in Congress and state legislatures are trying to head off any reform at the pass." Dave thinks the system is "broken" because 40 million people in this country do not have health insurance. Why don't they buy some? Even more reprehensible is his blind attack upon those profiting. Companies make profits Dave, and I'm glad they do, because if they didn't we would be in more trouble than if you were President. More: "Those (employers) who continue to offer health care have done so by cutting back on wage increases and other job benefits." A true statement. He continues his diatribe: "The crisis has everyone from the medical to the business communities taking a serious look at a national single-payer system that not only would give every American coverage, but could reduce the wasteful administrative bureaucracy that is strangling the current system." First of all, Dave should not use the term "everyone" when the accurate term is "liberals". Second, in commie Dave's utopian socialist world, every American would have coverage at the federal government's expense. Ah Dave, where is the federal government getting the money? What irritates me about liberals is they are convinced the government can provide for citizens better than citizens can provide for themselves via the free market. This country is the most prosperous civilization in the history of the world because of free market capitalism, not Dave telling us where or how to get health care. What's more, Dave forgets to account for the increase in coverage when the influx of citizens currently not provided for are provided health care. Lastly, the administrative bureaucracy that strangles the system today is no question minuscule in comparison to the bureaucracy that would head up a nationalized system. Dave's argument here is so ridiculous it's nauseating. Does anyone really listen to this clown?

Now I admit that I enjoy poking fun at whacko liberals, but the more important issue is that Dave has missed the point. He so set upon pushing the left's socialist agenda, he doesn't acknowledge the actual problem and he doesn't offer any real world solutions.

So what do we do? We provide the best health care that we (ourselves) can afford. Wait, that's how it works now.

Sorry Dave, I'm not one of the 40 million irresponsible Americans.

Mark Naber