



The Senate Health Care Reform Bill: Some Persistent Problems

by

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The Senate's proposed health care reform bill is certain to undergo numerous changes as Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) tries to attract enough votes to secure its passage. Some things will not change, though. After performing thorough analyses of current proposals and probable amendments, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission concludes that a number of unacceptable problems will persist. Of greatest concern are funding for abortions, high costs, and government-run health care.

Abortion. Recent Senate actions indicate that reform will include government funding of elective abortions. Consider the following:

- The Senate voted 54-45 on Dec. 8 to kill an amendment that would have prohibited federal funding of most abortions under health care reform.
- Federal funds will be used to pay directly for elective abortions in the government's public option.
- Federal funds will be used to pay indirectly for elective abortions in private health care plans through government-provided premium subsidies for people in low income brackets.

High Cost. The Senate health care reform bill will impose significantly higher costs on everyone.

- Free preventive care, while desirable, will drive up insurance premiums. If it were cheaper to provide this than to only cover illness, the insurance companies would already be doing it.
- Every proposal to date results in higher premiums, higher taxes, mandate penalties, and cuts to Medicare. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the current Senate bill will cost approximately \$2.5 trillion once fully implemented in 2014 and will require a nearly \$500 billion tax increase.
- The CBO also estimates that, based on the current Senate bill, an average family will pay \$2,000 more in health insurance premiums.

Government-run Health Care. The Senate is determined to expand the role of government in health care. Whether the Senate creates a public option or expands Medicaid and Medicare, the following is certain:

- As health care costs increase, the government will resort to rationing.
- Private insurers will be gradually squeezed out as their ability to compete is destroyed.
- Some people will lose their current health care plans.
- Medical services will be less available and quality of care will be diminished as fewer men and women go into the medical profession.

Current Senate proposals signal severe problems for the future of health care in our nation. While we need health care reform, the options currently being presented in Congress are unacceptable solutions.