Dealing With The High Costs Of Health Care

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The big health-care debate in Congress this summer was over the wrong issue. Instead of threatening to bankrupt Medicare by forcing the taxpayers to buy prescription drugs for seniors, Congress should relieve the taxpayers and paying-patients of the burden of providing hospital care for illegal aliens.
From Florida to California, illegal aliens show up at hospital emergency rooms and the costs are passed along to paying patients and to local taxpayers. The American Hospital Association estimates that the costs of bad-debt and charity care run into the billions.

A Martin County, Florida, hospital has spent $900,000 (with no end in sight) caring for a Guatemalan illegal who appeared at the emergency room two years ago with a brain injury after an automobile accident. He has no money and no family, but somehow he has a lawyer who has successfully prevented deportation to Guatemala.

A Jamaican illegal spent 17 months under care at the same hospital. After he ran up a bill of $500,000, he was finally sent home to Jamaica.

St. Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach treats one or two illegals a week and Delray Medical Center about 75 a month. Hospitals are required to provide care to anyone who shows up with a life-threatening condition.

Rep. Mark Foley (R-FL) has persuaded the General Accounting Office to study the financial costs that illegal aliens impose on hospitals. He says "we need to remedy this problem before we can no longer afford to take care of Americans."

Many Arizona hospitals have to treat automobile accident victims of dangerous driving by what are called "people smugglers." Two Tucson hospitals were stuck with treating a half dozen illegal aliens who were injured in a nighttime crash of their car traveling on the highway at 100 miles an hour.

A San Antonio hospital treated victims suffering from dehydration after up to 70 men, women and children were discovered by police in a tractor-trailer rig at a truck stop. Another tractor-trailer rig loaded with 40 illegal aliens, two of them dead from suffocation, was also found in July in Dallas.

The Palomar Medical Center in Escondido, California, has been caring for a comatose Mexican illegal ever since he got drunk and was struck by a car in May. He can't pay for the care, of course, but his lawyer is fighting his deportation to a Tijuana hospital.

San Diego hospitals had to face the burden of caring for 31 accident victims (not counting the seven who were killed) when a van carrying illegals from Mexico and Brazil crashed going the wrong way on an interstate at night with its headlights turned off.

Some aliens look upon an automobile accident as their entry ticket into the United States. They get treated at an American hospital and then may be released into no one's custody, and no one has any figures on the numbers.

Instead of dealing with these existing health-care burdens, some members of Congress are trying to hit the taxpayers with even more costs for illegal aliens. They are trying to make illegal aliens eligible for in-state tuition rates at publicly funded colleges and universities.

Texas and California are already subsidizing these aliens who have broken our laws while discriminating against students in lawful, taxpaying families from the other 48 states. A student from Arizona, for example, pays four times as much to attend the University of California as an illegal alien.

Last year the taxpayers who finance Medicaid paid the hospital bill for 6,000 illegal aliens to have their babies in Colorado. This totaled $30 million, an average of $5,000 per baby.

Those 6,000 births to illegal aliens are 40 percent of the births paid for by Medicaid in Colorado. Those 6,000 babies immediately became U.S. citizens and qualified for all Medicaid services at a cost that is not even tabulated.

To get immediate care, the illegal only has to say she is "undocumented." Pregnant American mothers can't avoid their birth-of- a-baby expenses so easily.

Denver Health is asking taxpayers to approve a bond issue to pay for a bigger obstetrics unit. The present unit was built for 1,600 births a year but last year it handled 3,500.

This Colorado information was reported by Al Knight of the Denver Post editorial board. He concluded with a fascinating comment: "There are many groups and interests that for one reason or another don't want this information to be available or to be discussed."

He didn't identify the "groups and interests." Who they are would be a good question to ask your Member of Congress, along with why Congress isn't doing its duty to protect Americans from the continued influx of illegal aliens.