"The Doctor Will See All of You Now"

by Phyllis Schlafly December 12, 2008

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You are sitting in a doctor's waiting room with eight other sick patients and the nurse announces: The doctor will see all of you now — at the same time. That's how the Boston Globe recently described shared visits that are being used to cope with the long waits now customary in Massachusetts.

Ted Kennedy and Barack Obama are planning that the new Democratic Congress's first order of business will be to extend the Massachusetts health-care mistake to all 50 states. Like other legislative rush-acts (i.e., the 2007 amnesty bill and the 2008 bailouts), details are currently withheld to avoid giving members of Congress and the public adequate time to analyze the bill before the vote is called.

If Kennedy succeeds in his goal of using the Massachusetts plan as a model for national health care, average Americans will no longer get immediate access to medical care. They will have the long waits and massive new taxpayer costs which the Massachusetts plan has produced.

Defending the practice of group visits, one doctor told the Boston Globe, "people came to me with similar complaints and I had these canned speeches." The doctor does not ask the patients to take off their clothes in front of the group; he makes do with less effective, fully-clothed examinations.

The group session consists mostly of hearing other people's complaints, while the doctor dishes out advice in front of all the patients. Privacy and modesty are gone, but you can pick up the germs of the other sick patients in the room with you.

One doctor observed that "this is not the type of medical care anyone with a modicum of intelligence would want." Is this the change Obama promised?

At Holyoke Health Center in Boston, patients wait four months simply to get an appointment. This causes some patients to go to costly emergency rooms for routine visits.

While emergency rooms are handling routine matters and taking medical histories, people who need urgent attention wait in line. In parts of western Massachusetts, which is non-urban like most of the United States, the wait has grown longer than one year just to get a physical.

The Massachusetts health-care plan is universal and mandatory. The Massachusetts plan also introduces other words into the health-care vocabulary such as group diagnosis, long waits, rationing, forced taxes, and high costs.

The Massachusetts plan forces people to buy insurance they do not want or need. Once they are compelled to pay for it, they naturally want something for their money, and that crowds out people who really need medical care.

The Massachusetts plan is a fiscal disaster, costing far more than estimated, with no end in sight. Massachusetts is wealthier than most states, but this plan threatens to bankrupt even it.

The Massachusetts plan forces people to buy insurance under threat of having to pay a penalty on their income tax return. Kennedy's staff has been quietly meeting with the insurance industry to make sure it will be just as happy with a national version of mandatory insurance as it is in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts politicians had promised voters not to worry about costs because the state would collect $95 million in fees in the first year from small businesses that do not insure their employees. But those fees were never collected because small businesses cannot afford this, and taxpayers are forced to ante up that shortfall.

Massachusetts taxpayers were not told that this plan forces public funding for abortion by anyone who wants one, not only the poor. Kennedy's plan will likely try to force Americans nationwide to pay for all abortions as the Massachusetts plan does, perhaps by regulations if not by statute.

Massachusetts medical care is beginning to look like Canada, where waiting lists, rationing, and travel to foreign countries for care have become the norm. Meanwhile, Members of Congress continue to enjoy special gold-plated health care not available to most Americans.

Former Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle, who is a high-paid health-care consultant for a lobbying firm, is expected to be appointed Secretary of Health and Human Services. He is holding town hall meetings this month to create the illusion of public support for the Kennedy plan.

As HHS Secretary, Daschle will write the regulatory details that Congress doesn't dare to put in the proposed statute. So much for Obama's promise to change Washington, eliminate the influence of lobbyists, and avoid conflicts of interest!

Obama is planning to use his giant campaign database to pressure Congress into speedy action. Americans will have to protest quickly if they want to prevent the mandatory and expensive Massachusetts plan from being forced on the country.