Who Will Lead the Charge Against Socialized Medicine?

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If you are not so worried about the Clinton Socialized Medicine Plan that you are actively working against it, you are in for a rude awakening. Your health and your freedom are in imminent danger of being taken over by the Federal Government.

If this steam engine rolling downhill is going to be stopped, grassroots Americans will have to do it, because Congressional Republicans have defaulted on their leadership role. As Senator Phil Gramm (the only one who has a health plan based on freedom rather than socialism) told a conservative gathering in Washington last week, if Republicans can't stand up and articulate united opposition to Socialized Medicine, they might as well disband as a party.

On the fundamental issue of socialism versus freedom, we cannot afford to compromise. The Clinton plan is the most totalitarian, but most of the other plans (both Democratic and Republican) have many of the same obnoxious provisions. Here is what every American has at stake in the health care debate.

You and your doctor will no longer be able to make your own decisions about your health care (tests, treatment, surgery, hospitalization) - because those decisions must be approved by higher government-controlled authorities who cannot be voted out of office.

You will have a very hard time seeing a physician specialist for a particular condition - because your request for a specialist can be vetoed by gatekeeper doctors who are rewarded with bonuses if they refuse to refer you to a specialist.

If you try to see a physician specialist without approval, even for a life-threatening condition, you can be criminally prosecuted for "health care bribery."

You will be forced to pay expensive health insurance taxes to a government monopoly. Clinton's plan calls these agencies "Regional Alliances," Cooper's plan calls them "Purchasing Cooperatives," but Government Collective is a more accurate term and the money you pay to it is a tax.

Under a system called "Community Rating," those with healthy lifestyles will pay the same health insurance taxes as those who smoke, drink too much alcohol, take illegal drugs, or practice unsafe sex.

Clinton's "one-tiered system" will not permit you to have any better health care than the drug addicts or others who haven't taken care of their bodies and haven't paid any insurance taxes. No matter how hard you work and save to provide for your family, you will be prosecuted as a criminal if you try to buy better insurance or better care than what the Collective bureaucrats decide is "appropriate."

All you will get for your taxes is a "comprehensive benefit package." The list of benefits will be determined by the government, and you will not have any choice. Clinton has determined that the "comprehensive benefits package" will include unlimited numbers of abortions, "condom clinics" in public schools, and generous hospitalization for psychiatric treatment, but will exclude other benefits you might prefer.

A National Health Board will decide the total amount that all Americans may spend on public and private health care (this is called "global budgeting"), and will keep us under that politically determined amount by means of price controls, waiting lists, and denial of treatment that the Gatekeepers decide is not "necessary or appropriate."

Clinton's bill includes a mandate on employers to buy health care for their employees. Everyone (except Clinton apologists) agrees that this will throw thousands, perhaps millions, of Americans out of a job.

If you think "reform" will reduce costs, you are dreaming. Most Democratic and Republican bills require higher taxes for a giant bureaucracy to administer the system, and to pay the costs of letting big businesses unload their health care liabilities for early retirees onto the taxpayers.

Your Health Security Card will give the government bureaucrats (and who knows who else?) computer access to all your personal medical records. Doctors will have to report every medical service to the national database.

The Clinton bill is based on raw compulsion. It uses the word "penalty" 59 times, "mandatory" 24 times, "prohibit" 51 times, "restrict" 54 times, "enforce" 87 times, "obligation" 56 times, and "limit" 269 times.

The solution to the problems of health care costs and uninsured Americans requires two changes in the federal tax law: (1) allow all Americans (not just corporations) to pay for health insurance with pretax dollars, and (2) allow all Americans (both individuals and employer-paid plans) to obtain coverage through tax-protected Individual Medical Savings Accounts for the first $3,000 per year of medical expenses, with catastrophic insurance covering anything above that.

Milton Friedman says that this plan would cut our health care costs in half. But the biggest benefit would be that we would save our freedom rather than succumb to socialism.

Only one bill in Congress meets the freedom test: S. 1807 sponsored by Senator Phil Gramm. It also solves the pre-existing condition problem by making health insurance personal, portable, and permanent (non-cancelable).