More Unaccountable Obama Czars

by Phyllis Schlafly July 30, 2010

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Barack Obama has appointed another Czar from Chicago: the new Food Czar Sam Kass. Officially, he is labeled Senior Policy Adviser for Healthy Food Initiatives, but he's joining the list of more than 35 Czars given broad and unaccountable power over our lives, habits and spending.

Everybody laughed when Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) asked Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan if it would be constitutional for Congress to order Americans "to eat three vegetables and three fruits every day." Kagan declined to give a straightforward answer, maybe because she knew that exactly that type of dictatorial mandate is coming soon, in both Obamacare and a ukase issued by the new Food Czar.

Far scarier is Obama's appointment of his new Health Czar, Donald Berwick, to be the top administrator over Medicare and Medicaid. The life-and-death powers he will exercise, the huge sums of taxpayers' money he will direct, and the dishonest way Obama evaded the Senate's constitutional right to interrogate and reject him, make this the most shocking of all Obama's appointments.

Obama told Joe the Plumber that he wanted to redistribute the wealth. We didn't realize what else Obama planned to redistribute.

Czar Berwick is on record as saying, "Excellent health care is by definition redistributional." He used this favorite Obama term in the context of praising Britain's socialized medicine system as "a global treasure" and "I love it."

Coincidentally with the announcement of Berwick's appointment, Britain's major newspaper The Sunday Telegraph uncovered widespread cuts in British health care that were adopted in secret and buried in obscure appendices and lengthy policy documents. These include restrictions on common operations such as hip and knee replacements and cataract surgery, the closure of many nursing homes for the elderly, and a reduction in hospital beds and staff.

Berwick admits that redistributing health care means rationing health care, which is why he has been called a one-man Death Panel. Last year he admitted in an interview, "The decision is not whether or not we will ration care — the decision is whether we will ration with our eyes open."

Note the imperial "we." That's the way czars talk.

Like a typical arrogant totalitarian socialist, Berwick assumes that smart bureaucrats should make life-and-death decisions and spend the money belonging to those they disdain as dumb, ordinary citizens. Berwick said, "I cannot believe that the individual health care consumer can enforce through choice the proper configurations of a system as massive and complex as health care. That is for leaders to do."

Berwick even promises he will train young doctors and nurses to understand "the risks of too great an emphasis on individual autonomy." To eliminate individual health-care choices, Berwick's bureaucracy will have a budget that is larger than the Defense Department and is 4 percent of our GDP.

Berwick's paper trail of "baggage" is why Obama gave him a recess appointment. He wanted to avoid the Senate's advice-and-consent power altogether and keep Berwick's damaging statements out of the news.

The term czar has come to mean a presidential crony appointee who was never vetted by the Senate and who exercises sweeping regulatory authority without congressional oversight. But let's not lose sight of the vastly increased regulations issued by established agencies.

Obamacare's 2,000-plus pages created about 160 new agencies and boards with regulatory power. The Department of Health and Human Services just published 864 pages of regulations to govern electronic medical records.

President Obama just signed the 2,300-page Dodd-Frank financial reform bill. Its implementation will require at least 243 new regulations by 11 federal agencies, several of which do not yet exist.

Obama's Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu, brags that under his leadership, the Department of Energy (DOE) has "accelerated the pace" of regulation and "placed new resources and emphasis behind the enforcement" of new regulations which "increase the stringency" of "minimum conservation standards" for all sorts of home appliances. Look out! The energy police are invading our homes.

In April, DOE issued a new rule that gas fireplace logs cannot use more than 9,000 BTUs per hour, which is about one-tenth of what current gas logs require. This new rule will wipe out the gas fireplace industry, and the gas log in my home would become illegal.

In May, DOE effectively banned showerheads with multiple nozzles by ruling that all nozzles combined will be permitted to deliver no more than an anemic 2.5 gallons per minute. This rule will destroy upscale showers and hand-held sprays used by the disabled and elderly, like the one I use.

Obama wasn't kidding when he promised to "fundamentally transform the United States." He has figured out how to bypass Congress and rule us by czars and a tsunami of regulations.