

WEAC Health Care Myth Busters 2009

The Radical Right and their for-profit health care allies have mounted a campaign to confuse and scare the public by using misleading and false information. Former health care CEO Rick Scott is on mission to stop health care reform by using his considerable fortune to mobilize and foment angry reform crowds to disrupt Congressional health care forums.¹ He is doing this through Conservatives for Patient's Rights (CPR). This activity illustrates that the stakes are high, and not just for those who profit from health care. They are equally high for our members. Should health care reform fail, insurance companies will feel unrestrained in raising health care costs just as they did after the failure of the Clinton reforms. Skyrocketing premiums will throw millions out of insurance, those remaining insured will pick up the burden – further escalating costs and playing into the Cadillac benefits mantra of the extreme right.

We can defeat those opposing health care reform. To do so requires us to address our positive reasons for promoting reform **and** the myths manufactured by our adversaries. Here are just a few of the myths that are being used at present.

False are claims that:

- **New rules could hike your health insurance premiums 95 percent.** A group known as Conservatives for Patient's Rights (CPR) is airing ads making this claim. That's a startling statement. But it's contradicted by other experts that find premiums would actually go down under the leading proposals in Congress. The claim comes from an analysis by a group that advocates for insurance carriers that sell policies in the individual market, among other areas. That analysis also doesn't take into consideration several elements of leading congressional legislation that other experts say will keep premium costs down – and in fact, lower premiums for some. Other independent studies show premium costs decreasing on average for Americans that currently have health coverage. <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/08/cpr-administers-bad-facts-again/>
- **“Any of the health care overhaul measures that have been approved by committees in Congress would add “a trillion to the federal deficit,”** This is another claim aired by CPR. The Senate bill would add roughly \$597 billion over 10 years, and the House bill that was approved by the Ways and Means Committee in mid-July would add a much smaller \$239 billion, according to the Congressional Budget Office. According to fact check the Iraq war has so far, cost around \$642 billion. <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/08/cpr-administers-bad-facts-again/> and <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/06/obamas-health-care-claims/>
- **“Washington wants to bring Canadian-style health care to the U.S.”** the health care bills moving through Congress don't call for a single-payer system like Canada's, and legislation that does support a purely government-run system is quietly dying in committee. Obama, too, has said repeatedly that he doesn't back a conversion to a single-payer system. <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/07/canadian-straw-man/>

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¹ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/10/AR2009051002243.html> Scott was ousted as CEO of the largest health care company in America Columbia/HCA in 1997 amid allegations of defrauding the government. The firm eventually pled guilty to charges they over billed state and federal governments for health care and paid a record 1.7 billion in fines for the fraud related charges.

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- **"They won't pay for my surgery, but we're forced to pay for abortions."** The Family Research Council says abortions will trump care for the elderly in public plan. In fact, none of the health care overhaul measures that have made it through the committee level in Congress say that abortion will be covered, and one of them explicitly says that no public funds will be used to finance the procedure. Furthermore, none of the bills call explicitly for cuts in Medicare coverage, much less rationing, under a public plan. <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/07/surgery-for-seniors-vs-abortion/>
- **Death Panels and "public bureaucrats can decide, based on a subjective judgment of their level of productivity in society, whether they are worthy of health care."** – Sarah Palin To set matters straight, the *Washington Post's* Ezra Klein chatted with Sen. Johnny Isakson, a Georgia Republican who has worked to expand coverage of end-of-life planning. In particular, he supports a voluntary, Medicare-covered counseling session for people with their doctors to discuss end-of-life options. The idea is to make it easier to decide in advance what sorts of care people want and *don't want* when facing death. http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2009/08/death_panels_debunked_sen_john.html
- **The Obama bill will promote Euthanasia.** Former Sen. Fred Thompson's radio show, former lieutenant governor of New York Betsy McCaughey said that the House's proposed health care bill contained a provision that would institute mandatory counseling sessions telling seniors how "to do what's in society's best interest ... and cut your life short." In truth, that section of the bill would require Medicare to pay for voluntary counseling sessions helping seniors to plan for end-of-life medical care, including designating a health care proxy, choosing a hospice and making decisions about life-sustaining treatment. It would not require doctors to counsel that their patients refuse medical intervention. <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/07/false-euthanasia-claims/>
- **A series of assertions** that on page ____ of the house bill you will find some of the following (below). You can check these outlandish claims by simply going to the following link to the bill: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h3200ih.txt.pdf
- **"Page 29: Admission: your health care will be rationed!" TRUTH:** Page 29 continues to define the "essential benefits package" and discusses limits on what Americans will have to spend on health care under this minimum standard. In no way does this section stipulate the rationing of care.
- **"Page 42: The 'Health Choices Commissioner' will decide health benefits for you. You will have no choice. None." TRUTH:** Page 42 begins to describe the Health Choices Commissioner's duties. The idea that this person will decide what benefits Americans receive is patently false, given that most Americans will keep their current plans under reform, and Americans within the exchange will have the choice of purchasing many different kinds of health plans. Rather, the Commissioner will establish minimum standards to protect Americans.