

# Portland Press Herald    Maine Sunday Telegram

## MAINE VOICES

### Government-run health care has dangers of its own

While some changes are necessary, our senators know that most people are happy with their care.

*JOSH TARDY and DOUG NEWMAN*  
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A few weeks ago, both Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins met with President Obama to discuss reforming our nation's health care system.

Both should be commended for urging President Obama and Congress not to rush into reforming health care.

Sen. Snowe, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, in particular should be applauded for making sure this committee did not rush through legislation prior to the start of the Senate's August recess.

Health care reform is one of the most important challenges our nation faces today. It is necessary and, without doubt, should be a priority for Congress and the White House.

However, we must be careful and cautious in our approach to reforming health care in America. We must fix what is broken while keeping what is working for millions of Americans; specifically, employer-based health care coverage.

According to a recent CNN poll, eight in 10 Americans are satisfied with the employer-sponsored health care plan covering them and their families. And recent polls indicate Americans are becoming more and more wary of a government-run health care plan.

Some surveys show more than 60 percent of Americans would rather purchase health care from the private sector, compared with 25 percent who would prefer a government-run plan, (Quinnipiac University, released Aug. 5).

A government-run health care option may seem to some like the solution to the problem, but it has the potential to destroy what is working for so many families today. With a government-run option setting health care prices artificially low, employer-based coverage won't be able to compete.

Many Maine workers and their families will be forced out of their employer-based coverage into the government plan, leading to government control of health care. And they may not like government control of their health care.

In other countries such as Canada where the government controls health care, sick patients often have to wait for medical care and cutting-edge treatments are frequently not an option. Long waits and limited access to treatments force sick people to emergency rooms, which are, ironically, the most costly settings for treatments and increase rather than control costs.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Rep. Josh Tardy**, R-Newport, is the House Republican leader and co-owner of Moosehead Manufacturing in Monson. **Doug Newman** owns Newman Concrete Services Inc. in Richmond and is chairman of Maine Small Businesses for Responsible Health Care Reform.

With government-run health care, will we be able to make our own health care decisions, pick or keep our own doctor, and have the ability to make decisions about treatments our doctor recommends? Or will those decisions be made by government for us?

With a government takeover, it is highly likely government bureaucracy will be in control of these decisions.

Last but not least, a government-run health plan will cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

Many new taxes are being proposed to cover the exorbitant cost of a government option. The costs to taxpayers are high and the cost of a government-run plan will balloon our deficit. In this economic downturn, a government-run plan is fiscally irresponsible.

In fact, a recent Congressional Budget Office report warned that plans being drafted by Congress would weaken our already suffering economy and drive our nation more in debt.

Many Maine business owners are concerned about the impact a government-run health care plan would have on their businesses, employees and families. Our nation's current financial crisis is already taking an enormous toll on Maine businesses and jobs.

A government-run plan could further burden struggling businesses, and small businesses in particular are a critical part of Maine's economy. Any additional mandate on these businesses could be crippling.

A government-run health insurance plan may seem to some to be the radical new "solution," but it leads us down the road to total government control of our health care.

Americans are becoming more wary of the impact of a government-run health care plan. Our senators are right to urge Congress and the president to slow down on health care reform until we have a chance to review the details.

Congress must craft reform that does not negatively impact employer-sponsored health care coverage and health care coverage that is working for so many Mainers, Americans, and businesses across Maine and the country.

Fixing health care needs to build on the strengths of our current system, not tear it down and create from the ground up. We need to move forward with reform in a common-sense and fiscally responsible manner – and including a government-run plan meets neither of these criteria.