

## THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN HEALTH CARE: SEN. JOHN MCCAIN (R-ARIZ.)

Presidential Candidate Forum: John McCain  
October 31, 2007

"...Everybody should obviously have access to affordable healthcare in America. But it doesn't mean that it has to be run by the government. It can be run by a private enterprise. It can be run by—in competition, I know of no function of government outside of National Defense that we shouldn't at least give an opportunity for the private sector to be engaged in. There is no transparency in prices in a government run program. There is too little patient involvement. The reimbursements are driven by public programs especially Medicare and obviously there is not enough incentives for preventive care."

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"In an ideal utopian world I'd love to see the government not involved at all. The fact is that we designed the system to care for people, initially Medicare as you know, and the same reason as Social Security because we owe them a safety net. We are a Judea-Christian valued nation that says we have to take care of those who can't care for themselves. But I find more involvement in any government program, more government involved in any program seems to be less efficient. And so the more involvement we can have, more incentives for insurance companies to provide options for wellness and fitness, more incentives such as allowing people to purchase insurance policies across America or even across the world."

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TIMOTHY JOHNSON, M.D.: Senator, you and other Republicans tend to characterized various Democratic proposals as government run, one size fits all.

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN (R-ARIZ.): That's a pretty good rhetoric isn't it?

TIMOTHY JOHNSON, M.D.: Yes. And I've heard it. But if you look, for example, at Senator Clinton's plan she tends to offer a lot of choice she says you like your private plan now keep it. If you don't you can try a Medicare like plan meaning you can choose your own doctor and hospital or you could try the Federal Employees plan where as you know from your own experience you have a long list of private plans to choose from. Somehow, that does not sound like one size fits all to me.

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN (R-ARIZ.): It may not be one size fits all but it certainly is an inexorable movement towards government run healthcare. If you require every American to have healthcare that's a mandate. Now, I respect Senator Clinton and her knowledge on these issues. She is very, very well versed on these issues. But to say nothing is going to change because we'll give you a series of choices but every American must have health insurance I think is certainly not everything going to be the same. And when you look at the fact that no private plans, even the Federal Employees health benefit plan, can compete with subsidized Medicare, as you know Dr., 98-percent of people who are given a choice chose Part B because 75-percent of Medicare is paid for by the tax payers.

So, what we're talking about is an expansion of a government program that is failing. Medicare is failing financially. And so now we want to expand it and every American is now going to be able

to join in a program that was originally designed for senior citizens and it's the same way with the SCHIP Program.

It was the same way with Medicare Part D when we expanded to cover all seniors rather than those who need it. It's the classic case of government expansion without paying for it.

TIMOTHY JOHNSON, M.D.: But if you look at government programs they tend to be the most efficient administratively speaking versus individual private insurance which has overheads of 20 to 30-percent for example. Would you take away Medicare or the Federal Employees Plan just because government plays a role?

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN (R-ARIZ.): No, but I'd—in all due respect, I question severely those numbers about percent of how much is in administrative cost. There is so much of it in Medicare that is not counted including the establishment of the entire bureaucracy. If there is competition between them in a fair and level playing field then I think that you will see more efficiencies. I don't know any part of Capitalism which is the basis of the success of the greatest nation in the world that doesn't have as a fundamental aspect of it competition. And yet other countries in the world throughout history who have practiced socialization, government run programs whether it be in farming or whether it be Medicare or medical care or whether it be most anyplace else they fail.

Why is the British system again on the brink of collapse? Why is it that we have now seen in England and in Canada basically a two tiered system? Those for the very rich that get immediate care and those who have a standard of healthcare that I don't think Americans would be satisfied to say the least. So, I question your fundamental principal—assertion that government run healthcare is more efficient than privately run insurance.”

McCain Discusses Health Care Proposal  
October 11, 2007

“Conservatives believe in the pursuit of personal, political, and economic freedom for everyone. We believe that free people may voluntarily unite but cannot be compelled to do so, and that the limited government that results best protects our individual freedom. In health care we believe in enhancing the freedom of individuals to receive necessary and desired care. We do not believe in coercion and the use of state power to mandate care, coverage or costs. I believe Americans want to be part of a system that offers high—quality care that respects their individual dignity, and is available at reasonable cost. Unfortunately, the American health care system as it is currently structured fails this test.”

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“Government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid should lead the way in health reforms that improve quality and lower costs. Like most of our system, Medicare reimbursement now rewards institutions and clinicians who provide more and more complex services. We need to change the way providers are paid to focus their attention more on chronic disease and managing the treatment. This is the most important care and expense for an aging population. And in a system that rewards quality, Medicare should not pay for preventable medical errors. I am appreciative of the therapeutic benefits of modern pharmaceuticals. However, I am strongly opposed to adding another unfounded entitlement to the fiscal train wreck that is Medicare by providing all seniors with a costly drug benefit, even those like me who can more than afford to pay for their medicine. After all, we vote ourselves a sufficient number of pay raises to take care of that.”