

The right's duplicity unveiled on health care

Thomas C. Fox | Jun. 24, 2009 NCR Today



For decades — from at least the time Joe Torre was a backup first baseman

with the Milwaukee Braves — and ever further back than that, the political right has complained that government is the problem, government programs don't work, and are too costly and inefficient. Meanwhile the right's mantra has also been that private enterprise does everything better because it's more creative, innovative and efficient than government.

Odd, then, that private insurers fear government competition. Odd they are so dead set against what's being called "the public option."

What's the fear?

A group of private insurers warned in a letter last week to Senate Health Chairman Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) that expanding the government's role in health care would lead to "devastating consequences," including steep reductions in employer-sponsored health coverage. As if that's not happening now with double digit annual increases to businesses small and large!

In a news conference Tuesday, President Obama countered that a federal presence in the marketplace is the only way to ensure that all Americans will have access to affordable coverage.

"Just conceptually," he said, "the notion that all these insurance companies who say they're giving consumers the best possible deal, if they can't compete against a public plan as one option, with consumers making the decision what's the best deal, that defies logic."

Why not offer it as the public option as one among many other private options? Could it be that government just might provide better health care at a lower cost? Could government *efficiencies* lower health care costs?

Why not have the option?

What seems to be clear is this: The public option will never make it to the table and into law unless an outraged public stands up and demands it.

Give us the option!

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