

HEALTHCARE REFORM (Part 2)

A final word ... perhaps.

by Vic Berecz

About six months ago, in my first posting on healthcare reform, I started out by saying I was “hesitant to become a part of the healthcare discussion because, at age 70, I am a part of a fabulously successful single-payer healthcare system called *Medicare*” and I ended with “Now we’ve just got to continue the process of compromises and narrowing the choices.” Well, as I see it that process is finally off to a good start. In recent weeks a meaningful first step in establishing the healthcare system of the future was approved by Congress and signed into law by President Obama. Is it perfect? No! Does it represent compromise? Yes! Is there a long way to go to get it right? Certainly! But, real progress is always made incrementally.

I understand ... no Republicans voted for these initiatives that are derisively dubbed *ObamaCare*. But, that’s pure politics. It doesn’t mean the bills weren’t the result of good ideas from both sides of the aisle, and clearly they resulted from compromises that brought liberal and moderate Democratic and independent votes into the fold. The most important thing about this “reform” is that a real reform process has finally gotten underway. As our President stated this week, healthcare and education are the two keys to the future competitiveness and prosperity of the United States. I strongly believe that’s true.

For most of the 20th century, every healthcare initiative in Congress was stymied until the approval in 1965 of the healthcare program for seniors we know as *Medicare*. Despite the success of Medicare, 45 years have passed before this next step was accomplished. Now, hopefully, a process of change and refinement based on actual experience can begin with a broader audience ... all Americans. The need for change and refinement ... call it *reform* if you wish ... will always be there – for the world changes, and we must change with it. As I’m quite fond of saying: *Change happens, and we must learn to navigate the new normal.*

What I hope to see, as our healthcare system progresses, is a special and intense focus on children’s health and on preventative care for all ages. Focusing on these two areas will do more to reduce future healthcare costs and improve our nation’s health than any other approach. The reason is simple. Health problems avoided cost nothing to treat and lead directly to one of the great promises of our American Constitution ... the general welfare of all Americans.

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