

Obstacle to health reform

I am one of the majority of Americans who believe that a public option is fundamental to any realistic plan to fix our broken health-care system. I am also one who doubts that it will ever be enacted.

Forget about whether it is good policy. Forget about whether it is in the public interest.

Policies are no longer considered in Washington on the basis of the public interest. They are considered on the basis of how they affect corporate bottom lines.

Here is a list of Blue Dog Democrats opposed to a public option that would force health-care industries to actually compete, thereby making health-care affordable.

In parentheses after each name is the amount of campaign money the individual has received in his career from "big health" (insurance companies, pharmaceuticals, health professionals, hospitals, and health services/HMOs). Source: <http://www.OpenSecrets.org>.

John Barrow, Ga. (\$333,875); Bart Gordon, Tenn. (\$1,448,462); Barron Hill, Ind. (\$474,138); Jim Matheson, Utah (\$892,840); Charles Melancon, La. (\$288,834); Mike Ross, Ariz. (\$890,510); Zachary Space, Ohio (\$140,275).

In the Senate, we find Max Baucus, of Montana, who recently trotted out the Finance Committee's alternate health-care plan (no public option, of course). Baucus is in hock to "big health" to the tune of \$4,028,785. His Democratic accomplice on the committee, Kent Conrad, of North Dakota, who also opposes a public option, has received \$2,193,650 from the same corporate coffers.

I haven't bothered to list any Republicans because they are all opposed to the public option, more as a means of bringing down the Obama presidency than because of any substantive critique of health-care proposals.

Question: Given the obscene amounts of legal bribery being accepted by our representatives in Washington, does anyone seriously believe that the health-care crisis will be solved? Where's the "change we can believe in?"

Tom Liston

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