



# VIEWPOINT

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## 'Sicko' Control of Health Care

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### *Summary*

Ken Blackwell evaluates Michael Moore's new documentary, "Sicko."

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Michael Moore got slammed by Larry King tonight. The outlandish documentarian was bumped from the "The Larry King Show" by none other than an ex-con, Paris Hilton.

Mr. Moore's film "Sicko," though, is certainly abuzz among liberal pundits. Mr. Moore offers a solution to millions of Americans without health insurance — government-run health care, just like Cuba.

Mr. Moore correctly identifies health care reform as a pivotal issue for this country, but he dives off the liberal deep-end by claiming the Cuban health care system is somehow superior to ours.

Let's put it this way. While Major League Baseball scouts may dream of free access to Cuban pitchers, shortstops, and clean-up hitters, few Americans would consider drafting a Cuban doctor for a critical surgery.

It's easy to discount Mr. Moore as just another half-baked Hollywood activist on a misinformed, politically fashionable tirade. That is, until you tune in to what the Democrat presidential candidates are saying. They, like Mr. Moore, believe a federal government-run health care system is the solution to our health care challenges.

While they may vary on specifics, all of them call for the federal government to take over medicine, controlling what doctor you can see and for what reason you can see them, and dictating what treatment you'll receive.

Conservatives strongly disagree with this approach. All 11 Republicans running for president, now that we can include Fred Thompson, believe whenever government takes over a program, it gets more expensive, leads to terrible waste, declines in quality of service, and endures countless delays and mistakes.

Think of the hassles you face at the department of motor vehicles. Now picture dealing with those hassles when you take a child to the doctor: Take a number to wait in line for countless hours, or days, for the wrong test, or to correct a prescription for the wrong medicine. Stand in one line for x-rays, then another for medication.

At each stage the person you're dealing with has to consult thick rulebooks written by bureaucrats hundreds of miles away. As mistakes are inevitably made, the nurse will be unable to get through to someone with the authority to fix the record or authorize the procedure.

Or worse, think of the absolute meltdown after Hurricane Katrina. Then consider dealing with that level of chaos at the hospital during an emergency. Imagine



Governor Strickland should guide Ohio toward the right path of Medicaid reform, not move more

being in a dire condition and having a doctor at your side unable to get through to the right person to authorize what you need done, or finding out that you can only be treated at another hospital on the other side of town.

Government cannot overcome the laws of economics. All resources are limited. Supply and demand set price, quantity, and quality. When you promise something for free, you run out of supply as people consume resources regardless of need.

Also, the smaller an organization is, the better administrators are able to handle unusual or emergency situations. The opposite is true for government because it is immense. For all these reasons, a national government takeover of medicine, promising unlimited treatment for 300 million people cannot possibly work half as well as the system we have today. We need to improve the system, not make it an endless bureaucracy.

Instead of a big-government takeover, the candidates should support allowing competitive markets to fix health care. Patients need providers and researchers competing against each other to provide better services and medicine. This only occurs when patients have a choice among providers and are free to go elsewhere if dissatisfied.

They must understand the superiority of the free market when it comes to bringing down prices. Government wastes countless of billions of dollars because it does not have to compete, so prices soar and you pay for all of it through higher taxes.

Private sector personnel keep searching for ways to do it faster and cheaper, so that they can offer a lower price to attract business. They work long hours to innovate, improve, eliminate waste, fix problems, develop new products and services, and offer solutions. When that happens, consumers win. In a medical context, that means more lives are saved and people are healthier.

Finally, all of the candidates must talk about prevention. We can prevent many emergencies that result in hospital stays. Problems like childhood obesity and overuse of alcohol and tobacco result in terrible injuries that are either deadly or force a person into decades of constant discomfort with the need for extremely expensive care.

There will always be those with special needs. Government is needed to help people, but government must be the last resort, not the first. It should be a safety net for those who suddenly fall out of the system, not become the system. If we empower people to take care of themselves, it will free up the government resources necessary to help them.

Liberals enjoy an advantage in the polls in health policy because they promise everyone will get care for free from an all-knowing, all-powerful government, as if government can ever get it right.

Conservatives believe in enhancing a system focused on individuals and families that will keep everyone healthier and save lives. They must make that case to the people.

As the debate over health care reform continues, Americans should remember Dr. Jose Luis Garcia Sabrido. He was the Spanish surgeon flown to Cuba to operate on Fidel Castro. It seemed that Cuban doctors botched the job on el presidente and needed outside help. I wonder if they made Mr. Garcia Sabrido available to other Cubans during his visit? I must have missed that part in "Sicko."

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