

Iowa State Association of Letter Carriers



President's Report

August 2009

I have to say, I had no intention of covering Health Care again this month after writing an article in June about why we needed health care reform in this country. However, the debate has gone beyond the norm and has entered the fantasy world.

I've received better information listening to "Coast to Coast AM" (yes, the alien, ghost, paranormal radio show) than I've been hearing from those opposed to health care reform. So, let's cover just a few of the most outrageous accusations.

Now, our Senator Grassley has waded in concerning death panels. He says that we should be concerned about them. Was he concerned in 2003 when he voted in favor of the same legislation that would allow Medicare recipients to be reimbursed for seeking end of life counseling? It should also be noted, that this particular language was presented by a conservative republican (Johnny Isakson, GA). Now some how it's become "getting rid of grandma!" I'm not even going to address the Sarah Palin "evil" comment, even though she supported similar language in Alaska just a few years ago. (Sen. Isakson referred to her as "nuts".)

Senator Grassley also stated that he had held up the legislation, basically to allow those opposed, to get organized and rally to defeat this legislation. Bipartisan? I think not.

In an editorial commenting on the healthcare debate, the newspaper, Investor's Business Daily claimed: ' People such as scientist Stephen Hawking wouldn't have a chance in the UK, where the National Health Service would say the life of this brilliant man, because of his physical handicaps, is essentially worthless. Unfortunately for the IVD, Steven Hawking, recent winner of the Medal of Freedom, is a citizen of Great Britain and was in a UK hospital as late as this past April. Hawking has stated that were it not for the UK system, he would not be here.

Now, you may not agree with the current legislation, I don't either. I think we should be debating a single payer system. One that would bring down the costs, provides health care for all, and improves care. Of course, the detractors believe that would be Socialism, which they're calling the 'public option" language in the current legislation. Socialism - much like what social security was called when it was passed into law - much like Medicare was also tagged. Well, if that be the case, I'm all for it.

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Some interesting data exists which you can find on the internet (I urge you to research for yourself and take no one's word, including mine) which compares health care costs per person, across a broad range of countries, including the United States. **See chart below.**

Look at what you and the postal service are paying, not including deductibles and co-pays, roughly \$11,500 per year! This would be well worth it if the life expectancy of U.S. Citizens was well above the other industrialized countries, however, it's not. In 2008, we ranked 37th overall.

As I've stated previously, health care (insurance) reform is a must. While the current legislation is not what I would have written, it's at least a good start!

Total Health Expenditures Per Capita, U.S. and Selected Countries, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2003

	1970	1980	1990	2003
Australia	\$252*	\$691	\$1,306	\$2,886
Austria	193	770	1,328	2,958
Belgium	148	636	1,341	3,044 [^]
Canada	299	783	1,737	2,998
Denmark	384*	927	1,522	2,743 [^]
Finland	191	590	1,419	2,104
France	205	697	1,532	3,048
Iceland	163	703	1,593	3,159
Ireland	117	519	794	2,455
Italy	NA	NA	1,387	2,314
Japan	149	580	1,116	2,249 ^e
Luxembourg	163	640	1,533	4,611 [^]

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Netherlands	NA	755	1,435	2,909 ^e
Norway	141	665	1,393	3,769
Sweden	312	944	1,589	2,745
Switzerland	351	1,031	2,029	3,847
United Kingdom	163	480	987	2,317 [^]
United States	352	1,072	2,752	5,711

**The latest numbers I've seen show that the U.S. is over \$6600.00 per capita

Lastly, I urge you to monitor the status of H.R. 22 and S. 1507 concerning the postal service and the pre-funding of Health Care Benefits for retirees. Watch for e-Activist messages (you can sign up thru www.nalc.org) and be ready to act. Current language in S. 1507 is not acceptable and would bind the hands of arbitrators when deciding on monetary/benefit awards.

I also promise that this will be my last health care article (a least until next month).

Mike Birkett
President,
Iowa State Assoc. of Letter Carriers
www.iowalettercarriers.org