

To: GOP Health Care Advocates

Re: GOP Health Care Strategy

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July 7, 2009

The research Chairman Steele has conducted at the RNC on health care has produced some significant new insights allowing us to advance GOP interests in the health care debate.

Following are a few observations based on that work, understanding these views do not necessarily reflect those of the Republican National Committee.

Where We Start

We are fighting something bigger than policies or plans. The President and the Democrats are selling **a cause**. Never mind that their plans will actually increase costs for individuals and the country:

Their cause is reducing health care costs.

To the public, reducing health care costs is health care reform.

Quality: As Wes Anderson has noted, people are satisfied with the quality of their health care. Quality is not driving this debate.

Access: While everyone favors increasing access, access is only seen as a problem because of cost. Access alone, unrelated to cost, is not driving this debate.

Choice: Americans believe they have choice; so much so that it makes health care anarchic, confusing, and chaotic. **Choice confusion**, they tell us, allows the system to take advantage of them. Though more choice may be a solution, Americans do not perceive the lack of it as a problem. If anything, they perceive the abundance of choice as a problem. Choice is not driving this debate.

Cost is driving this debate.

We cannot compete with **their cause v. our policies**. We must compete with **their cause v. our cause**.

Our cause must be about what is driving this debate as well. Our cause must also be **bringing down health care costs**.

The good news is that reducing costs consistent with free-market principles is not only the GOP mission, it is also a different and better way of doing it than the Administration is proposing. We only need to congeal what have become our talking points into a cause. This cup needs a handle.

Language

We need to bring **new language** to this debate. If we paint the house the same color, no one will notice anything has changed:

We will still be the same, outdated Republicans who have no new ideas and oppose everything. We have to bring something new to the game.

We tested new language on the survey.

The GOP Cause

"Republicans are here today for a cause: We want to help families and businesses get a hold of health care costs and bring them down. Health care costs every family and every business too much. We all know that and we have to fix that. Republicans see a new and better way of doing it.

"That's why we are excited to join the growing number of Americans supporting **the patient-centered health care reform movement**.

"We believe the **patient-centered health care movement** offers the best way to reduce health care costs, bottom-up, with patients and doctors in control.

"The **old, top-down Washington-centered system** the Democrats propose will empower Washington to restrict the cures and treatments your doctor can prescribe for you.

"Their **Washington-centered system** will end up costing trillions more, not less, and bankrupting the country. This is what they do - a trillion here, a trillion there, pretty soon, our country ends up owing real money.

"It's time to look at health care reform in a new way.

"The President sees the problem. So do we. He talks of making health care more affordable. So do we. But we have a completely different vision of how to fix it.

- "They want a **Washington-centered plan**.
- "We support **patient-centered reforms**.
- "They want a big **Washington Experiment with our health**.
- "We want common-sense **simple fixes** that will yield real results.
- "They want to start building a **closed health care system** where Washington decides how much money will be saved on health care by controlling the doctors you can see and limiting the treatments and cures your doctor can prescribe.
- "The patient-centered health care movement supports an **open health-care system** where patients and doctors make those decisions.
- "They want a **top-down** system where bureaucrats far away end up deciding what health care is worth paying for and what isn't, and for whom.

- “We want a **bottom-up, patient-centered system** where control remains with your doctor and with you.
- “They want **political and artificial** cost-reductions from Washington.
- “We want to **get politics out of health care** not put more politics in. We want **common sense fixes** not **politically driven experiments**.
- “They want to empower a big Washington-run **monopoly** to control your health care.
- “We say **monopolies are just not natural. Big monopolies are bad** no matter who runs them, whether it is big government or big insurance businesses.

“Ultimately, with their **Washington-centered plan**, you won’t be able to keep the things you like about your health care:

- “Obama’s plan will put government in charge of the doctors you can see and the types of treatment you can receive.
- “Obama’s plan will cut hundreds of millions of dollars from seniors on Medicare.
- “Obama’s plan will further bankrupt the country with trillions more in deficit spending.
- “Obama’s plan will raise a lot of taxes on middle class families and businesses. Taxing insurance, taxing sodas, even taxing health care benefits. It doesn’t matter if your insurance charges you more through the front door in higher premiums or President Obama charges you more through the back door in higher taxes. It’s the same thing. **You are going to pay a lot more.**
- “Obama’s plan will tempt your employer to dump you into a cheaper, government-run health care program. End of the day, it doesn’t matter who takes your private coverage away, whether it’s your insurance company, the government or your employer: When it’s gone it’s gone. **You are going to lose your health coverage, and then you will see a reduction in the quality of your health care.**

“In a nutshell, **getting government more involved is not going to reduce costs.** It will extend wait times, limit what you can get, cost you coverage; raise your taxes and the deficit

“They tell us more Washington will make health care cost less. Really? Can we stop for a second and ask when Washington has made anything cost less?

“The truth is **the Obama-Pelosi plan** doesn’t save money. Their Washington-centered plan, from Day One, costs a trillion more dollars.

“Common sense tells us, something is wrong here: Saving money on health care shouldn’t be more expensive.”

Slow Down, Mr. President

“The Obama Experiment with our health could change everything we like about our health care -- and our economy.

“This big a risk, that risky an experiment is not something leaders on either side should rush through Congress in a few days or weeks.

“This is 20% of our economy. This is our health care and our future. If we screw this up, it could last for generations. And Congress is trying to do this in two months! This should scare the living daylights out of all of us.

“Slow down, Mr. President. We can't afford to get health care wrong.

“President Obama is experimenting with America, **too much, too soon, and too fast.**”

Key Message Point:

Even voters who support a “public plan” think Obama and Congress are moving too fast, with reckless speed, risking a huge part of our economy and our health care, when they don't know what reform would really bring.



If we slow this sausage-making process down, we can defeat it, and advance real reform that will actually help.

Key Message Point: We've got to **“SLOW DOWN the OBAMA EXPERIMENT WITH OUR HEALTH.”**

Reforms

The following is a menu of other **bottom-up, common sense fixes** (policy ideas) and **new language** that the **patient-centered health care reform movement** might support:

- We support requiring/incentivizing doctors and hospitals to post pricing and outcomes. In this day and age, why aren't the cost of all tests, treatments, procedures and office visits -- as well as effectiveness of treatments posted openly on the Internet?
- We believe health insurance companies should compete with each other with simple, one-page contracts/summaries so insurance is simpler, cheaper, and fairer. (Like many banks are doing w/ car or home loans). And how about incentivizing insurance companies to have simple, one page

reimbursement forms?

- We believe doctors should be protected from frivolous, expensive lawsuits so they can work together with other doctors and patients in their communities to reduce unnecessary and expensive tests and procedures.
- We want to change the law so you can take your health insurance with you if you have to change jobs (eliminating expensive and unnecessary insurance turnover).
- We want to change the law so insurance companies can't deny you coverage because of pre-existing conditions.
- We want to cut out the "Washington health care middle-man," reducing expensive bureaucracy to produce big health care savings.
- We support (tax incentives?) new paperless, computer-age health care IT systems to reduce the cost of health care management as well as reduce medical mistakes.
- Every American should have **equal opportunity** to get the best value and buy the cheapest insurance no matter where he lives or whom he works for. We want to change the law so any American can buy the lowest cost insurance available nationwide, not just in their states -- whether from insurance companies, businesses, church groups, college alumni associations, or groups like the AARP, who often provide it less expensively.
- The Wall-Mart way to bring costs down is better than the Washington way. So we want to use **consumer-buying power**, also called "**group buying power**," not Washington price-controls, to bring health care costs down.
- We support effective prevention, wellness, and disease management programs because they will improve our health and save money.
- We support bold new tax deductions for companies that develop new treatments and cures because that is smarter than paying for chronic long-term illnesses we can't cure today.
- We believe in bottom-up health care savings: every American should get a tax deduction for their health insurance premiums.
- We believe the working poor should get a refundable, advanceable tax credit to help them get health insurance.
- We want to incentivize and expand practical, down-to-earth reforms that are already working and reducing health care costs all across America. Safeway's plan, which gives employees a stake in holding down health care costs, is a model. Instead of cutting care or shifting costs to employees, Safeway has held health care costs flat the last 4 years, while it's up 40% for the rest of corporate America.

- We support special "too much paperwork" tax credits for small businesses, so they don't have to bear the intolerable costs of filling out insurance forms or meeting government mandates and regulations.
- We want to give small businesses the same cost-saving breaks big businesses get by helping them form small business health plans and small business health co-ops.
- And no lifetime health care benefits and insurance for Congressmen who leave their jobs -- unless and until everybody else in America has the same.

And From Here...

"... and as I said throughout the campaign, change never begins from the top down. It begins from the bottom up." President Obama, Feb. 9, 2009

Unfortunately, what President Obama promised during the campaign, he has abandoned as President. Instead of putting his faith in the American people and bringing change from the bottom up, he has put his trust in Washington and given us more, old, trickle-down big government. In health care and everywhere else, our President has given us nothing new. It's the same old thing, just bigger and more expensive: One federal pill for every ill.

Such old thinking from such a young President is a disappointment and it is time to put it behind us. The future belongs to those who really believe change comes from the bottom up -- from the American people and not Washington, DC.