

Doing Nothing Today is Going to Cost Us in the Future.

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18 July 2009

The debates surrounding the health care initiatives as well as the energy initiatives are founded in fundamental change and resistance to change. People know the current systems are flawed, but people are willing to allow companies to continue business as usual. We have seen a general decline in coverages, rising premiums and rising costs, but these are the preferred systems that Americans want?

The problem with doing nothing substantially different than we are doing today is highly risky. The energy industry and the health care industry are varied entities that have made money on the current processes, and they will resist the idea of someone changing the profit formula. If we continue to listen to the profit motivated argument of status quo processes, we will continue to have aging infrastructure, reduction of available resources, a missed opportunity, and reduced ability to pay for future changes.

We have had chances to make meaningful change and legislation in the past only to forgo them to the idea that the private sector will find the cure to what ails the system. Today, we have not seen the cure to what ails the system and in fact, the conditions have only got worse where the rising costs are double and triple times inflation. Thus, the premise that the private sector will find a way seems a bit misguided at best. Someone has to provide a direction and goal instead of allowing companies and people to ignore the real issues here. Some hard sacrifices will be required. Additionally, there is a chance for us to profit in new ways that are mutually beneficial to the companies and the population.

The old saying, “kicking the can down the road” is appropriate here. When we pass the burden for another generation to handle, we will miss the opportunity to be inventive and innovative in this generation and before other countries. We push the rising burden of the issues to the future generations. We will hand our global competitors the crown of technological prowess and be subject to their offerings rather than profiting from ours. Today, we can calculate what the costs are and provide a plan for cost changes. Today, we can be creative and build technologies and processes that the rest of the world will need. In the future, if we do nothing new, those cost structures will not be as flexible as they are today and the technology may no longer be ours to design.

How can one expect future generations to actually pick up the can (do the work) if the current generation has only been providing better examples of how to kick the can more (avoid the real issue)? We know what needs to be done and we know the initial start up may not be easy as is the case for any transition or new development. Yet, we can not continue to push the issues to future generations or we will lose a great opportunity to invest in a bountiful future.

Further, procrastination of the issues will force people to make unpopular decisions with foreign markets in more direct competition than we have today. We will likely be forced to make abrupt changes that will likely require drastic costs whether we have the means or the willingness to address them. Evidence can be seen in how we mishandled our oil surpluses during the 1950s and 1960s, and then faced oil embargos in the 1970s.

The energy issues are not new today and we knew we had to sacrifice as far back as Nixon administration. Yet, we have allowed companies to argue to pass on burdens against effective innovative cleaner policy less dependent upon foreign resources.

The problem with supporting health care reform without a viable public option is that we are left with more of the same bloated, high cost, long wait health care system that is more interested in reactive treatment rather than preventative care. With a whole generation of Americans getting ready for retirement in the next few years, rising expensive health care is going to be a paramount concern as more people are beholden to fixed incomes and Medicare funds get less sustainable. As well, costs to support that system will rise unfettered along with a steady reduction of services.

We have not tried a public option (except for Medicare for retired people). Other countries have tried public systems with decent success and reduced overall costs. American seniors enjoy not worrying about getting health care. Further, we can not privatize a public plan like we did for Part D of Medicare. We have seen what privatizing a public plan can do with the mess and all of the confusion around Medicare Part D drug plans as well as continued rise in pharmacy costs for seniors. Medicare Part D did not resolve the price issues because government was not allowed to negotiate prices.

Americans can not get a fair deal with prescriptions despite the billions the government already spends through tax subsidies for pharmaceutical research and development (e.g. taxpayer funded pharmaceutical balance sheets). Instead, the companies got richer using the elaborate and complicated health plans. Meanwhile, they still found more and more ways to deny coverage to lawful and paying patients. This is like putting money into a savings account and the banker gets to keep the money.

For health care, make the plan simple, allow people to keep what they want if they want and allow people the option to stay healthy. Let the doctors and patients make the health decisions—not the bureaucrats and not the insurance agents. A world class health care system is useless to those who can not afford to get service and meaningless when companies or government bog down the process in red tape and mechanisms designed to deny service.

For energy and health, we can not afford to miss this opportunity to do something great for the future.

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