

OP ED: Healthcare for All Has Become Punishment for All

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In the 2008 campaign, we heard healthcare in this country is “broken” and must be “reformed.” We heard “healthcare reform” would be the signature piece of an Obama Presidency. We were promised no new taxes on anyone earning less than \$250,000 per year. We heard promises of transparency in government. We heard promises of a White House that would listen to all. Now that President Obama and a Democratic majority are in office, what have we gotten?

The healthcare proposals have become a massive power grab to control your money, your health options, your businesses, your liberty, and ultimately your life. It is not about insuring the poor. We already have Medicaid to cover the poor.

What the Democratic majority is doing to healthcare in this country is a crime. Punishment won't fall on Congress and the President, who are excluded from the healthcare proposals. Punishment falls on the American people, especially the elderly.

Word of a new “stealth” strategy to ram healthcare “reform” through the Senate raises even more cause for alarm and adds to the crime of this massive power grab. The plan appears to be for Senator Majority Leader Reid to merge the two Senate bills that have passed out of committee, and attach them as an amendment to a House TARP bill, already passed by the House but curiously gathering dust in the Senate. Once the Senate votes on this “TARP” bill with the healthcare amendment tucked neatly inside, the healthcare punishment is a “done deal” without further debate. Such an abuse of power and due process would be an unforgivable crime against the American people, perpetrated by the very people elected to represent us.

Instead of “health insurance for all,” the House and Senate healthcare bills have become *punishment for all*. Here is the list of Americans who face the healthcare “reform” punishment:

- *Punishment for the sick.* Those who have medical expenses each year will no longer be able to deduct those expenses on taxes until the expenses reach 10% of adjusted gross income (AGI). The current deduction is set at expenses above 7.5% of AGI, so the Senate plan now ADDS a 2.5% tax on those who are already paying out of pocket for medical expenses. Clearly, if someone is spending more than 7.5% on medical costs, that person is ill. The Senate bill makes the sick even sicker from the stress of having to pay more taxes!
- *Punishment for the elderly.* Medicare cuts of 404 BILLION is the latest figure released by the Senate; earlier the White House budget office said \$500 Billion – more than a full year's Medicare budget – would have to be cut from Medicare. How can anyone begin to think these cuts will not penalize the elderly by delaying, rationing, or denying treatment?
- *Punishment for young people.* Young healthy people who do not buy government mandated insurance will be punished with the form of a *excise tax* – reported amounts have been from \$1900 to \$3800 per person.

- *Punishment for anyone not paying the excise tax.* The IRS fine for non-payment of tax can be \$25,000 and a year in jail. So those who are punished by the new tax risk being accused of a tax crime if they don't buy government-mandated insurance and who don't pay the penalty tax.
- *Punishment for insurance companies.* Companies providing "generous health insurance plans" will be hit with a 35% tax.
- *Punishment for consumers who buy "generous" health insurance policies,* as the tax on insurance companies is passed on to purchasers.
- *Punishment for those who buy their own health insurance...*a new 40% tax. Does it really make sense to punish the responsible people who take care of their own healthcare bills?
- *Punishment for low income seniors, Hispanics, and Blacks* who will lose their Medicare Advantage program under the new proposals.
- *Punishment for those with Health Savings Accounts* – HSAs will be extinct.
- *Punishment for specialists who serve mainly elderly patients, such as cardiologists and oncologists.* Such specialists are slated to have their reimbursements for services slashed by 44% under the Senate bill.
- *Punishment for medical device makers* in the form of new taxes (a tax that will be passed on to consumers).
- *Punishment for all doctors,* who are required to purchase expensive new computer systems and software to convert to Electronic Medical Records to meet the 2014 mandates in the Stimulus Bill.
- *Punishment for those who value their medical privacy.* The Stimulus Bill requires all physicians, beginning in 2014, to send patients' medical records directly to the federal health czar without further permission from patients.
- *Punishment for all 50 State governments.* Already running at a deficit with the recession, State governments face catastrophic increases in costs with Medicaid costs being shifted to them by the Federal government under the new proposals.
- *Punishment for everyone,* due to Speaker Pelosi's proposal for a National Sales Tax (also called a VAT) to pay for healthcare reform. This new tax would hit everyone hard in a recession, and would be on TOP of existing state and local sales taxes.

Punishments for all. All, that is, except the exempted elite: members of Congress, the President and his family, trial lawyers, and Unions (SEIU, AFL-CIO, and others). The exempted elite retain their private care while becoming the very ones who force more taxes, penalties, higher costs as punishment on the rest of us.

This reminds me of the Soviet Union when I visited there in 1974 and 1975. The Soviet ruling elite were the only ones with cars, comfortable apartments...and access to the best healthcare.

I understand at a personal and professional level the perils of government-run healthcare. I have patients in my practice who have come from many countries with government run healthcare that doesn't address women's unique health needs. I live in a state with a large Native American population, whose healthcare under the Indian Health Service, run by the federal government, has been abysmal. I have personally had an emergency hospitalization in England. I am walking today because I had the best spine surgery care in the world at Johns Hopkins. If I had lived in Britain, or Canada, or Europe and had to wait for MRIs and surgery, I would be paralyzed from the neck down.

I will never agree that nationalized healthcare *anywhere* provides better quality of care than we have in the United States. I am not alone. Recent polls by different organizations have found that 80-90% of M.D.'s and D.O.'s oppose government-controlled healthcare.

Don't be fooled by the American Medical Association's endorsement of Obamacare. Only 17% of practicing physicians actually belong to the AMA. Last week's "white coat" photo op at the White House was a carefully selected group of 2008 campaign donors "Doctors for Obama." They were NOT anymore representative of practicing physicians across this country than the AMA.

The American people should be even more alarmed by a recent Investors Business Daily poll: 45% of doctors who responded said they would retire or resign from medicine rather than practice medicine under government control. Who will take care of patients then?

The proposed healthcare plans are the most massive transfer of power to the executive branch of government that has ever occurred or has even been contemplated. This concentration of power in the executive branch violates the Constitutional requirement for balance of power, and for separation of powers among the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government.

This crime against the American people is far worse than the Stamp Act levied by King George. That was the final straw that set off the *first* American Revolution.

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DISCLAIMER: Dr. Vliet speaks as an independent physician, not as an official spokesperson for any organization. Dr. Vliet has no financial ties to any health care system, pharmaceutical company, or health insurance plan. Her allegiance and advocacy is to and for patients.



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Elizabeth Lee Vliet, M.D. is a women's health specialist who received her M.D. degree and internship in Internal Medicine at Eastern Virginia Medical School, then completed specialty training at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. She received B.S. and M.Ed. degrees from The College of William and Mary in Virginia. Dr. Vliet is the 2007 recipient of The Voice of Women award from the Arizona Foundation for Women in recognition of her pioneering advocacy for the overlooked hormone connections in women's health. Dr. Vliet's books include: *It's My Ovaries, Stupid!*; *Screaming To Be Heard: Hormonal Connections Women Suspect-- And Doctors STILL Ignore; Women, Weight and Hormones*; *The Savvy Woman's Guide to PCOS*. Dr. Vliet is a member of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, a seasoned expert commentator and a passionate fighter against [government takeover of health care in the proposed Health Care "Reform" that seeks to eliminate or penalize private options.](#)

Dr. Vliet's medical educational website is www.HerPlace.com.

For further information on healthcare reform, Dr. Vliet suggests these websites:

www.PatientsUnitedNow.com, www.JoinPatientsFirst.com, and www.TakeBackMedicine.com

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