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How to Get Universal Health Care

by Joel S. Hirschhorn

Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama say they believe in giving Americans universal health care. I don't believe them. Anyone who takes the time to understand universal health care should conclude that only a simple single payer system will reform the current outrageous system that benefits the insurance and pharmaceutical industries.

The contorted plans from Clinton and Obama are not sufficient reforms. And what John McCain has proposed is sheer nonsense and by itself should cause any conscious American to avoid voting for him.

Fights for health care system reform are centered in Congress, as if legislators will do what they have never done before: achieve true, major and systemic reforms that only serve the public interest, not lobbyists and campaign contributors from business sectors.

Both Clinton and Obama believe that Americans have a moral right to universal health care. If this is correct and if this is what you believe, then achieving universal health care that covers absolutely everyone by making health care affordable to absolutely everyone, as it is in many other nations, requires a different kind of government action. What exactly?

We must expand the Bill of Rights as embodied in the US Constitution to include the right to affordable universal health care. The time has come for the public to conclude that the right to universal health care is as important and necessary as the right to free speech and all the other beloved constitutional rights. Common sense says that health care is a right, not a privilege.

After all, what good are our current constitutional rights if you are ill or dying prematurely because of a lack of good health insurance? Certainly the pursuit of happiness cannot be successful when individuals are suffering from poor health because of inadequate health care.

Why would sensible, caring Americans be against a constitutional right to universal health care? Are there people who would stand up and publicly condemn the right of all Americans to have first rate health care? The only ones I can imagine doing this are those now benefitting financially from the current unjust system, those blocking necessary congressional actions.

What Obama and Clinton should explicitly and loudly advocate is a constitutional amendment that makes universal health care a nonnegotiable right of all Americans.

Why has no member of Congress submitted legislation to get Congress to propose such an amendment for ratification by the states? Clearly, the only rational answer are the many business interests that have corrupted Congress and that benefit from the current system. The Constitution provides an alternative.

Article V provides an option never used in the entire history of the US, because Congress has refused to obey the Constitution and respect state requests. The Article V convention option was put in the Constitution because the Founders and Framers believed that one day Americans would lose trust and confidence in the federal government. With 81 percent of Americans believing the nation is on the wrong track and with so many millions of Americans lacking good health insurance and care, that day has surely arrived. And with abysmally low levels of confidence in Congress and the president, an Article V convention – a temporary fourth branch of the federal government – is clearly the right path to obtaining a universal health care amendment. A convention of state delegates could debate such an amendment and if they agreed to propose it, then the standard ratification by three-quarters of the states would still be necessary.

Yes, this would probably take a few years. But it would be worth it. The prospect of Congress, even with Clinton or Obama as president, achieving universal health care without business-friendly loopholes faster than the amendment approach is not good. The process of pursuing such an amendment, moreover, would help keep pressure on Congress to do the right thing.

If this sounds reasonable and necessary, then learn the truth about the Article V option at [FOAVC.ORG](http://foavc.org) and start talking up a universal health care amendment that Hillary and Obama should support.
