

The Health Care Debate Heightens

By *Eric L. Wesson*
CALL Staff Writer
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It is very interesting to watch as President Barack Obama's approval rating has plummeted in the midst of the health care debate which very few people truly understand as conservative talk shows take over the minds of many Americans, creating turmoil and discord throughout the country during town hall meetings.

The Rasmussen Reports Presidential Tracking Poll for Thursday, Aug. 13, shows that 29 percent of the nation's voters Strongly Approve of the way that Barack Obama is performing his role as president. Thirty-seven percent 37 percent Strongly Disapprove giving President Obama a Presidential Approval Index rating of minus 8.

However, in July, prior to introducing his health care plan and comments about the arrest of his long-time friend Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr., by Cambridge Police Sgt. James Crowley, which he may not have known would spark a national discussion, his approval rating was around 56 percent. He also had a Presidential Approval Index rating of plus 9.

His comments about the Gates incident led to outrageous charges against him from conservative radio talk shows as well as television talk shows. Most notable, television host Glenn Beck, who said during a show. "I'm not saying that he doesn't like white people I'm saying he has a problem. He has a, this guy is, I believe a racist,"

In spite of the fact that President Obama's mother was white and his grandmother was white, Beck also said during a morning show on Fox News Network July 28, "The president has a deep seated hatred for white people or their white culture."

Weeks later many Americans show up and are outraged at town hall meetings across the country fueled with the same outrage toward the president and his policies. One man showed up at a rally in New Hampshire with a handgun outside of a rally in which President Obama was speaking at.

THE CALL spoke with Ms. Melissa Garza, Legislative Council for Senator Claire McCaskill, about the misconceptions being presented to the public concerning the health care debate.

"Right now there are three versions from various House committees. There is one Bill in the Senate from the Health Education and Labor committee and we are waiting on the Senate Finance committee," Ms. Garza said.

“The three in the House will be merged into one and the two in the Senate will be merged into one and eventually one bill will be presented to the President,” she said.

“Many of the things that people are hearing and getting upset about are not even in any version of the plan. For example, people are saying that the plan would fund abortions. That is not true. It would be against the law to do that,” Ms. Garza stated.

THE CALL asked how the health care plan will help small business owners provide health care coverage to their employees.

“The bill help small businesses provide health care for their employees. Right now they don’t have any help at all. In the language that we have seen both the House and the Senate understand the challenges that small business owners are under when it comes to providing health care,” Ms. Garza said.

“One if the proposals offers a tax credit to some small businesses where they cover up to 50 percent of the cost of any health insurance premium that they pay. It will create an exchange where small businesses can go and find more options that is more affordable to them and their employees and help pay those premiums. So, hopefully it will go well for small businesses under the prepared pages,” she said.

Even though her focus is on health care reform THE CALL asked why the climate was so intense concerning President Obama’s health care project?

“I can only say what I have heard Sen. McCaskill say and that is people are frustrated with all of the changes that are going on. We had a big stimulus bill that passed. We had the large bailouts of the banks. We are considering legislation to change some of our environmental policies and now we have the health care plan. It is a lot of change all at once,” she stated.

“Plus people are just making stuff up as they go along trying to upset other people. It is a combination of a lot of change and just not enough information out there for the general public. People are using this as an opportunity to vent,” Ms. Garza stated.

Another one of the issues that has come to surface during these town hall meetings is the large salaries that many insurance company executives make. According to reports the average CEO within the health care insurance industry makes \$11.9 million or 468 times the salary of the average American worker at \$25,434. Their total compensation packages among top executives in 2007 was \$118.6 million.

To proponents of the measure it is doctors and insurance company executives are helping financially fuel the debate and disruptions.

Americans are concerned that revamping the health care system would reduce the quality

of their care, increase their out-of-pocket health costs and tax bills, and limit their options in choosing doctors, treatments and tests, the one poll found.

The percentage who describe health care costs as a serious threat to the American economy, a central argument made by President Obama while he was campaigning, has dropped over the past month from 68 percent to 47 percent. This is due in part to the Democrats slow response to conservative comments according to Rasmussen Reports.

Although President Obama continues to benefit from strong support for the basic goal of revamping the health care system, and he is seen as far more likely than Congressional Republicans to have the best ideas to accomplish that. But reflecting a problem that has hindered efforts to bring major changes to health care for decades, Americans expressed considerable unease about what the end result would mean for them individually.

But, the biggest fear is that the government will takeover health care in the same manner as they have taken over the car industry and banks some of President Obama's critics say.

Opponents of the proposed health care overhaul have already spent \$9 million on television advertisements raising concerns about it, Evan Tracey, said. Evan is the chief operating officer of Campaign Media Analysis Group, which tracks political advertising. The advertisements are financed by the Republican National Committee and aimed at constituents of wavering lawmakers. The committee is also running radio spots.

Officials said the advertising would accelerate as the legislators returned home for the summer. The advertisements present the overhaul as a risky experiment, or a government takeover of health care that would prevent people from choosing their own doctors. As a result President Obama took his message on the road and urges fellow Democratic leaders to do the same.

“First of all, nobody is talking about some government takeover of health care. I’m tired of hearing that. I have been as clear as I can be. Under the reform I’ve proposed, if you like your doctor, you keep your doctor; if you like your health care plan, you keep your health care plan. These folks need to stop scaring everybody, you know?”

Democratic leaders have sought in particular to reassure people who already have health insurance and whom the overhaul plans under consideration in Congress would benefit by preventing insurers from dropping them or diluting their coverage if they become ill, while also bringing rapidly rising costs under control. And he sought to stoke a sense of urgency for getting a bill signed this year.

“If we do nothing, I can almost guarantee you your premiums will double over the next 10 years, because that’s what they did over the last 10 years,” President Obama said.

“It will eat into the possibility of you getting a raise on your job because your employer is going to be looking and saying, ‘I can’t afford to give you a raise because my health care costs just went up 10, 20, 30 percent,’ ” he concluded.