

May 5, 2009

A Turning Point in the Health Care Reform Debate...

Today witnessed what is perhaps a turning point in the health care reform debate. This morning the senate finance committee, Max Baucus Chairman, experienced a series of pleas for full debate including the single payer option just as the hearings were commencing. Fifteen health policy pundits were scheduled to testify, not one of them remotely identified with the single payer health finance reform movement.

The impromptu speakers from the audience were consciously employing non-violent protest, in the tradition of the 1950s civil rights movement to demand full participation of single payer advocates. Chairman Baucus for several weeks has been declaring that "single payer is off the table". His receipt of \$500,000 health industry donations strongly suggests a conflict of interest in his adamancy in rejecting full free speech debate in the Congress.

Overall the Congressional and Administration incremental proposals preserve and even expand the stake of private insurers and our mortally ill health system. Single payer proponents to the contrary argue that the insurance companies are the problem and actually enlarging their stake in the multi-trillion dollar health system is a potentially fatal disaster both medically and economically. Therefore, increasing the actions to call the nation's attention to this peril are quite appropriate.

The coincidence of the possibility of a worldwide flu pandemic dramatically illustrates the need for a rational functioning health system which all observers recognize we do not have. Single payer advocates believe strongly that only their health finance reform can meet this challenge.