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Skyrocketing Medical Costs Their Causes, and How To Bring Them Under Control

By Jonathan Hill
AFP National Chairman

With Congress and President Obama proposing a "solution" to our nation's health care woes, the issue of health care is becoming more of a focus for all. Truth be told, it is hard for most of us to not focus on it anyway. With the national average cost of insurance for a family of four at \$12,700 (\$16,897 in Massachusetts), the financial squeeze is severe, especially during tough economic times.



Unfortunately, proposals being floated on Capitol Hill are not a solution, and are likely to make matters worse. Tellingly, a similar insurance system in Massachusetts is teetering financially and, according to the *New York Times*, "may not be sustainable over the next 5 to 10 years ...[without] significant steps to arrest the

growth of health spending."

There, it was touted as legislation that would reduce costs, with large drops in insurance premiums predicted. Instead, in 2007, the year after the new system's inauguration, premiums rose 7.4%, and the meltdown keeps getting worse. Last year, Massachusetts premiums rose by 8-12%, with a 9% rise expected this year. In contrast, the national annual increase has been under 2% for the same three year period.

Rocket science is not a prerequisite for understanding that prices go up when there is a surge in demand without an increase in supply, and that whenever you make free or subsidized access to services available, demand for those services will surge. The result in Massachusetts should have been expected.

In response, some might argue that present imbalances will be recti-



President Obama listens to Senator Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., speak at the March 5, 2009 White House Health Care Summit. Photo by Pete Souza

fied when increasing demand stimulates medical providers to increase the availability of services. This can happen, but in Massachusetts, the increased demand appears to be part of a double-blow for medical practitioners; there, reimbursements have been cut, in particular for hospitals which serve the largest proportion of the poor, and Medicaid reimburse-

ments, according to providers like Boston Medical, are only about 60 to 70 percent of actual cost. If providers are being asked to deliver more for less, a situation which eliminates any market stimulus to increase the supply of medical services, then there are only two options remaining: costs will continue to be shifted from those
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Global Warming or Politicians Blowing Hot Air Which Is a Greater Threat to Humanity?



Former Vice-president Al Gore testifying before Congress on March 23, 2007.

By Michael Lynch
AFP Press Secretary

In an old folk tale, Chicken Little gets hit on the head by an acorn while eating lunch and comes to the hysterical conclusion that "The sky is falling!" He even convinces his friends of the impending doom, and they run off to warn the king in hopes that he can rescue them.

In recent news, a scientist in dire need of academic tenure performs a computer simulation, at which time he gets hit on the head by a bolt of stupidity. He reaches the conclusion that "The polar ice caps are melting! Humanity will soon be extinct because global warming will cause an ice age that will make it impossible for us to produce food!" He immediately runs off, tells a bunch of other



scientists, some Hollywood celebrities, the Discovery Channel, and Al Gore.

The scientists report the findings to their universities and government laboratories. These agencies realize government will spend more money on research if taxpayers think it will improve their lives. So, they plan to prove that humanity is causing climate change and show us how to stop it. They realize that climate-change cycles throughout history which have not caused mass extinctions are boring, so nobody wants to spend money on them.

Producers of science documentaries join the fray, realizing that more people watch television when it warns about impending disaster to humanity, than when it analyzes the mating rituals of dung beetles.

Al Gore believes the news and

starts burning millions of gallons of airplane fuel to tell the world that our use of excess fossil fuels will increase the world's temperatures, thereby melting the polar ice caps and causing another ice age.

This tragic news is also believed by the King—I mean President—who has devoted his life to rescuing people from banks, the automotive industry, and health-insurance companies. He promises to protect people from themselves and the forces of nature. The President will save the day!

We can chuckle at Chicken Little, since his story humorously pokes fun at a trait of many people. We fear the unknown, so we exaggerate circumstances or expect catastrophes when we have few facts (and misunderstand the ones we do have). Policy-makers in Washington and elsewhere should heed the wisdom of that story, but instead they become modern-day Chicken Littles. They
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Traficant is Back!

But are we dedicated enough to emulate him?

By Jonathan Hill
AFP National Chairman

Jim Traficant is back, and has come out swinging. Already, his many appearances on the talk show circuit -- with Fox's Sean Hannity and Greta Van Susteren, as well as with MSNBC's Chris Matthews -- show him to be as uncompromising, unnerved, and entertaining as ever. Seven years in the slammer have not caused the former sheriff of Mahoning County and eight-term congressman to swerve from his goals of putting America First, reining in the IRS and Justice Department, opposing our unbalanced policies in the Middle East, and defending the newly re-deported John Demjanjuk.

As a sheriff, he made national headlines by refusing to enact foreclosure notices on unemployed workers and by serving time in jail as a consequence. In 1983, he became the only person in history to defeat RICO charges leveled against him -- ostensibly by using information from the FBI to prove that the head of an FBI office was on the Mafia's payroll. The publicity he received allowed him to run a successful low-budget campaign to capture Ohio's 17th congressional district seat, which he held until July of 2002.

He has stepped on a lot of toes and made a lot of enemies, and those enemies have reason to regard him as a real threat. He fingered the Justice Department for not investigating millions in contributions to the Democrat Party from a Chinese general, and accused Attorney General Janet Reno of treason during a Fox News interview, due to her failure to investigate

the theft of reams of nuclear weapons data from the U.S.; in doing this, he suggested that information brought forward in affidavits indicated that Reno was morally compromised, and therefore potentially subject to blackmail.



Traficant has long sounded the alarm about the excessive influence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), citing the case of John Demjanjuk as an example. In a recent American Free Press (AFP) interview, Traficant remarked about this case: "Well, let me tell you about the power of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). No one in Congress would accept the evidence I had clearing Demjanjuk nor would they agree to hold a hearing regarding the activities of the Justice Department in this case. Demjanjuk had been stripped of his citizenship and he was scheduled to be executed in Israel. No one in the government of the United States would listen to the evidence.... I have to give Israel credit. They accepted the evidence and our government wouldn't. Our Congress wouldn't and our courts wouldn't, but Israel did. They knew that our government perpetrated one of the greatest crimes in history and as soon as I got Demjanjuk back to the United States, the Sixth Circuit Court issued a statement saying that this case was a tragic but honest mistake by the government."

Traficant stated, "No one in the Justice Department ever faced charges for this. They knew that Demjanjuk wasn't 'Ivan the Terrible.' The documents I used to convince the Israelis to free Demjanjuk came from the Justice Department." Traficant has also pointed his cross-hairs at the IRS, by playing a key role in the 1998 tax reform bill that shifted the burden of proof in tax disputes away from the taxpayer and onto the IRS. The result was major. Traficant stated that wage attachments dropped from 3.1 million to 540,000; property liens dropped from 688,000 to 161,000; seizures of individually owned homes dropped from over 10,000 to 57 nationwide.

He does not mince words about the evils of our tax code. In the AFP interview, he says pointedly, "The tax code is at the root of the problems we have in America today. We have a communist Marxist-Leninist tax policy in America. People don't want to believe that, but it's the truth. The predicate of the Marxist economic platform was a progressive income tax aimed at the so-called wealthy."

Later in the interview he states, "We are the [most] socialistic nation in history, for the truth of the matter is that socialism is the redistribution



Former Congressman James Traficant addresses an Ohio Tea Party rally shortly after his release from federal prison. Photo credit: Wayne Herrod

of the wealth and no one redistributes wealth more than the United States of America. So we are a socialist system, augmented by a communist dollar program, a Marxist progressive income tax. Jim Traficant is saying that the income tax system in the United States is a Marxist program, the foundation of the Marxist economic platform.

"In addition, I'm saying, the Federal Reserve System should be abolished, not audited, abolished. And Congress should coin money and should put our borders in order and regulate commerce with foreign nations and move to a fair tax which empowers everyone and has everybody pay their fair share; and nobody [would be exempt], including drug dealers, people on the street, the underground economy, illegal immigrants. Everybody pays [with the retail sales tax]."

Congressman Traficant was a clear and present danger to the overarching federal colossus in Washington. It is no surprise that the Justice Department, FBI, and IRS targeted him. In 2002, Traficant was "convicted" of bribery, racketeering, and tax evasion, despite the absence of physical evidence or audio and video tapes after many years of supposed FBI investigation. Many individuals have now come forward and given testimony of strenuous attempts by the federal prosecution to tamper with witnesses and suborn perjury. Some had testified before the federal judge to this effect, but the jury was not allowed to hear their testimony, according to Traficant.

Richard Detore, former Chief Operating Officer of U.S. Aerospace Group, was an especially effective witness. He testified at the House Ethics Committee hearings that the prosecution put heavy pressure on him to fabricate claims that he had overheard Traficant accepting a

bribe; at one meeting, Detore stated that Prosecutor Craig Morford engaged in a tirade and threw objects at him. In a peculiar way, Morford reportedly asked Detore about news reports relating to Janet Reno, thereby indicating that the prosecution's interest in Traficant might be related to the Congressman's conflict with her. Detore stated that he was threatened with indictment and pressured so greatly that, if it were not for his family, he would have considered suicide. Morford eventually indicted Detore, ostensibly for funneling bribes to Traficant; but Detore was quickly cleared by a jury. After watching Detore's stunning testimony, Leo Glaser, a juror in the 2002 Traficant trial, publicly repudiated his vote to convict the Congressman. Years later, despite persisting concerns of misconduct, Morford was appointed acting deputy attorney general at the Justice Department.



Photo credit: Wayne Herrod

Some, including Traficant, have drawn comparisons to the way that he was treated by the House, and the way that Congressmen Gerry Studds and Dan Crane were handled during

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Traficant is Back!

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the 1983 Congressional page sex scandal. Both admitted to having sex with a 17-year old male and female page, respectively. Both were censured, but not expelled.

In Traficant's case, notwithstanding that Congress was nearing the August recess -- providing an excellent opportunity for members to more carefully review the evidence of prosecutorial misconduct -- a vote to delay the expulsion failed 146 to 285. One might speculate that this was related to the impending vote on H.R. 3009, which included an unconstitutional provision to grant presidential Fast-Track Trade Promotion Authority; it was narrowly passed on July 27th by a vote of 215-212, only three days after the expulsion vote.

Traficant is an especially high-profile case of a whistleblower being targeted, but there are in fact many more. I know from personal experi-

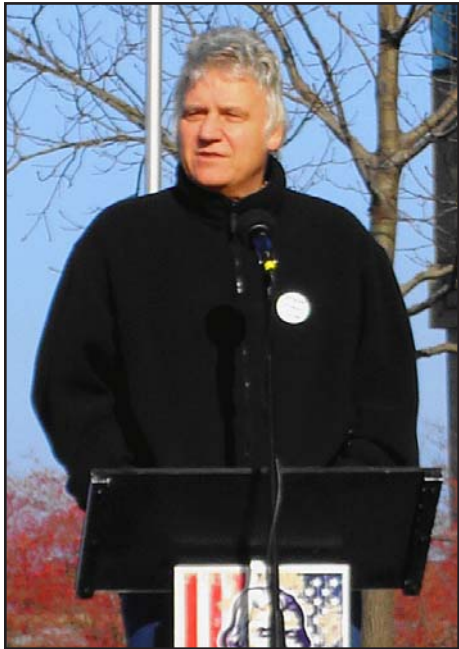


Photo credit: Wayne Herrod

ence that some have been imprisoned and stripped of their properties, and have faced outlandish obstruction from courts and government agencies when trying to get relief from their persecution. Others, like Sibel Edmonds, the FBI translator who raised concerns about the associations of a well-connected coworker, have been fired.

Edmonds, who was twice gagged by invocations of the State Secrets Privilege, has recently, via sworn testimony, made claims about influence peddling and theft of classified documents. These involved the number three person at the State Department and prominent Congressmen, whom she names, with access to classified briefing materials. The security leaks to agents of foreign governments relate to Israel, Turkey, and Pakistan. Her revelations include the frequent use of U.S. Air Force aircraft in Central Asian operations to transport members of the bin Laden family from 1997 up to 9/11. These operations involved the transport of weapons in one direction, with the return flights transporting drugs into Belgium and the U.S., again on U.S. military aircraft; Edmonds states that Marc Grossman, the third highest ranking person at the State Depart-

ment, was leading this effort.

All of the above merely touches the surface when it comes to surveying the corruption in government. But the only reason we consider it here is to convey a sense of how seriously our nation's integrity has eroded. These are dangerous times for whistleblowers, but also, for all Americans. A government which is out of control is a dangerous thing, because it has the people's resources with which to fight the people. This makes the matter of corruption too big a problem for one person to fight alone. Therefore, we need to band together and organize ourselves under the principles and platform which offer the solution to our nation's predicament.

Let us get practical, though. How can we build this party, despite our limited funding? There are three legs to our plan: (1) running competitive candidates, as opposed to the long-shot campaigns which characterize many third parties; (2) promoting participation in our Activist Program, which promotes activities that are likely to identify party members who are serious about doing work, while also identifying scores of new member/donor prospects at the grass roots level; and (3) providing a stable national party structure which respects the sovereignty of state parties, which is governed by representatives appointed by them, and which provides logistical and organizational support to our state organizations.

Space limits a full discussion of all of this. But something should be said about the Activist Program, mainly because it has so much potential for success at little expense. The Activist Program is simple: it consists of a portfolio of activities which our rank-and-file members can choose from. They are tried-and-true methods, like petitioning and pamphleteering, and are suited to people with limited time and skills, but who are serious about getting beyond the talking stage and building the party.

There is virtually no doubt that these methods would rapidly accelerate our progress to becoming a viable national political force, and the scale of participation required is not enormous. For example, based on a trial run in one of the most liberal towns of Massachusetts, we have been able to get people to sign 2 petitions on hot-button subjects like homosexuality and immigration at a rate of 7 persons per hour! Based on this, just 20 people per state working 8 hours per week for 8 months of the year (or the equivalent man-hours) could provide us with about 750,000 new donor and member prospects nationwide. If only 10% of these were to join or contribute, the result would be a dramatic increase in our effectiveness. And importantly, this can all happen in the span of just one year.

I hope you agree that this level of

Party Founding Principles

The Statement of Principles of the America First Party was adopted at the first meeting of the National Committee on April 20, 2002. The Principles provide an outline for the Party's Platform, which contains a section for each of the Principles headings. Each Platform section then expands upon that particular set of principles.

The Statement of Principles is the core statement of beliefs of the America First Party. As such, a two-thirds vote of the National Committee is required to adopt any change to the Principles.

The Party Constitution binds both the National Committee and the National Convention to adopt a platform consistent with the Principles. All party leaders are required to support and advance the Principles as a condition of holding a position of trust within the America First Party.

Preserve and Protect Our People and Our Sovereignty

- Support a military whose mission is to protect our nation, not police the world
- Strengthen our borders and promote rational immigration policies
- Protect English as our common language
- Seek friendship with all nations, but avoid entangling alliances
- Work to maintain our nation's sovereignty and oppose all attempts to make our nation subservient to the precursors of global government
- Apply American values to our foreign policy

Promote Economic Growth and Independence

- Restore accountability and Constitutionality to budgets and taxes
- Promote tax policies that adhere to the Constitution, enhance individual freedom, encourage savings and investment, and promote the family
- Eliminate unconstitutional portions of the federal government
- Rebuild our manufacturing base and protect American workers
- Protect our right to fair trade and oppose free trade, exit NAFTA and the WTO
- Help American businesses stay in America
- Promote a Buy American policy
- End taxpayer bailouts of corporations and foreign governments
- Implement a self-sufficient energy policy

Encourage the Traditional Values of Faith, Family, and Responsibility

- Protect and recognize the sanctity of all human life
- Defend the traditional family unit based on one man and one woman
- Promote the primacy of parents in the lives and education of their children

- Respect the free exercise of religion
- Recognize the Judeo-Christian heritage of our shared values

Ensure Equality Before the Law in Protecting Those Rights Granted by the Creator

- Defend the self-evident truth "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"
- Preserve and protect all of the Bill of Rights
- Oppose all quota systems - merit and behavior must prevail
- End judicial tyranny and restore balance to our political system
- Restore property rights and restrict government land confiscation

Clean Up Our Corrupted Political System

- Remove the primary source of corruption by sharply reducing the size and scope of the federal government to its limited powers under the Constitution, and return control over all other matters to the states
- Require that all political donations be promptly disclosed and come from voters
- Enforce fair, uniform standards for ballot and debate access to give voters more choice
- Implement clean election practices - restore paper ballots
- Reform the lobbying system so that the only organizations permitted to lobby are those organizations whose money is acquired strictly from voter donations. Reasonable individual voter donation amount limits must be established
- End lavish Congressional pensions - put them on Social Security
- Ban taxpayer funded Congressional campaign mailings
- Restore the rights of states in the manner of choosing Senators and Representatives and promote the citizen legislator

participation must be realized, and that, if possible, it must begin with you. Our nation is clearly hemorrhaging in many ways from the policies of the two major parties. To unnecessarily delay our response could be disastrous and judas-like, and would constitute a failure worthy of the contempt of future generations.

Let us hope, pray, and work for the goal that Americans will understand the gravity of our nation's condition, and that they will channel their efforts away from the parties which have been trampling on the

Constitution for generations. A restoration of the Republic is possible, through the gradual and consistent implementation of a viable strategy, but the success of this plan is dependent on the spiritual values of Americans.

Will we despair, or will we have a vibrant faith and love of neighbor, community, and nation? At the heart of much of our nation's troubles is individual spirituality. The choice of spirituality -- despair or courage -- is ours, and the fate of our country hangs on what choice we make.

Global Warming or Politicians Blowing Hot Air

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have read or heard some radical scientific theories suggesting a drastic threat to humanity, and they are eager to believe the dire news and take drastic action to solve the problem. However, the solution may cause more harm than good.

The Federal Government's most recent effort to save the planet is currently awaiting action by the Senate. The American Clean Energy and Security (ACES) Act passed the House of Representatives on June 26, by a vote of 219-212. The bill, also known as the Waxman-Markey Bill [after sponsors Henry A. Waxman (D-CA) and Edward J. Markey (D-MA)] was placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar on July 7. The Senate version, sponsored by John Kerry (D-MA), is currently in the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

ACES is designed to "create clean energy jobs, achieve energy independence, reduce global warming pollution and transition to a clean energy economy," according to the bill's title. Its supporters believe it will reduce carbon emissions by 17% by 2020 and by 83% by 2050. These ambitious goals would be achieved by a number of measures.

ACES is primarily an emissions trading or "cap-and-trade" bill. It seeks to reduce carbon emissions by setting a maximum quota of pollutants that a company is allowed to produce. If a company needs to produce more pollutants, it can buy credits from those companies that have emitted less than their share. ACES goes a step further, by requiring larger electricity providers (those that produce over 4 million megawatt-hours per year) to produce more than 20 percent of their electricity from re-

businesses. While Congress may claim authority to pass this bill, since the Constitution (Article I, Section 8) authorizes it to regulate interstate and international commerce, several key questions must be asked. Did the Founding Fathers intend "Commerce ... among the several States" to include greenhouse-gas emissions during production, or were such matters to be left to individual states? For the most part, this seems to be an issue for the states. Such a broad definition of "interstate commerce" renders the commerce clause virtually meaningless.

Are the provisions of ACES in the best interests of Congress' constituents, i.e., voters and other American citizens? While environmentalist groups applaud the bill, business and industry organizations have mixed feelings. The United States Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) both oppose the legislation. Among its criticisms of the bill, NAM points out that ACES' provisions will result in the loss of 2.4 million jobs.

One very important question is, "Does the government even need to act?" Drastic new laws should be created only after one considers the benefits of a policy, compared to the threats posed by inaction. In other words, if global warming actually threatens the survival of our species and we can do something about it, drastic measures may be justified.

According to proponents of the legislation, global warming is a serious threat to the survival of humanity, so action must be immediate. Barack Obama said, "There is no longer a debate about whether carbon pollution is placing our planet in jeopardy. It's happening." This is the



Coastal region of Antarctica in October (mid-spring, Antarctica time). Photo by Jon Brack, National Science Foundation.

nored. A website, www.petitionproject.com, has gathered over 31,000 signatures from scientists (9000 of them with Ph.D. degrees) who agree with the following petition:

"We urge the United States government to reject the global warming agreement that was written in Kyoto, Japan in December, 1997, and any other similar proposals. The proposed limits on greenhouse gases would harm the environment, hinder the advance of science and technology, and damage the health and welfare of mankind.

"There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate. Moreover, there is substantial scientific evidence that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide produce many beneficial effects upon the natural plant and animal environments of the Earth."

Contrary to the claims of environmentalists, there are quite a few legitimate scientists on the list of signers; it is not a list of made-up names. Some of them are reputable leaders in the scientific community: Edward Teller, considered the father of the hydrogen bomb and a leader in the development of Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars"), signed the petition before his death in 2003. In addition, a number of influential scientists have not signed the petition, but have spoken out against AGW; the number of scientists who doubt AGW theory is probably much larger than 31,000.

Although not one of the Petition Project's participants, one of the earliest advocates of AGW theory, geophysicist Claude Allegre, has come to doubt the theory he once championed. He now claims that the causes of global warming are "unknown." He proposes that most of the alarmists who prophesy the end of the world by global warming are motivated by money. He has said, "The ecology of helpless protesting has be-

come a very lucrative business for some people!"

Hendrik Tennekes, one of the world's leading authorities on the physics of turbulent flows, has challenged the models that are used by AGW advocates to support their theory. He has said, "The blind adherence to the harebrained idea that climate models can generate 'realistic' simulations of climate is the principal reason why I remain a climate skeptic." He does not believe that computer models can adequately account for all the factors involved in the climate. Tennekes' textbooks are influential classics in the fields of fluid dynamics, turbulence, and meteorology.

So, Mr. President, there is still a debate. Over 30,000 scientists, including thousands who specialize in atmospheric, earth, and environmental sciences, do not accept the theory of AGW. Granted, there are legitimate scientists on both ends of the spectrum in this debate. The claim that "There is no debate" (in almost any scholarly pursuit) is usually a cop-out by those who are afraid of a debate.

So, what are the facts? They are hard to pin down, as much evidence is contradictory. Supporters of AGW theory point to a few pieces of evidence to argue that human activity is causing significant climate change. However, according to *The Skeptics Handbook* by Australian science writer and television host Joanne Nova (available online at <http://www.globalwarmingheartland.org/>), four of the most crucial elements of AGW theory have failed. In the next few paragraphs, I will summarize her arguments, along with data provided by others who question AGW. Some studies argue that there is no global warming at all; others provide strong evidence that any global warming at this time is actually the result of normal, cyclical natural phenomena, such as cycles of activity on the sun.

First, she writes, "The greenhouse signature is missing": She
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... Geophysicist Claude Allegre has come to doubt the theory he once championed.... He proposes that most of the alarmists who prophesy the end of the world by global warming are motivated by money.

newable sources by 2020. Renewable sources include solar, wind, nuclear, or geothermal energy.

The bill was rushed through the House of Representatives within a six-week period (most bills require several months from the time they are introduced into Congress, work their way through committees, and receive approval in a vote by the entire House), despite its monumental length. The bill is 1200 pages long. It includes a 310-page amendment which was introduced at 3:47 AM on June 26 and was "considered as read." The House voted on the entire bill less than eight hours after this amendment was added, so it is inconceivable that any representatives had a real chance to read the bill with that last amendment in place.

The length of the bill concerned a number of critics. So did the extent of restrictions that it would place on

essence of a claim made by many advocates of a theory known as "anthropogenic (man-made) global warming" (AGW). AGW theory can be summarized in the following manner: human activity (including fossil-fuel consumption and manufacturing) is increasing the level of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases" in the environment, thereby increasing global temperatures; this will result in drastic changes to the environment, leading to other changes in global weather patterns, melting of the polar icecaps, flooding, famine, and other natural disasters. Such catastrophes will inevitably lead to a large number of human deaths and mass extinction: the demise of a large number of species, including humanity.

However, if there is "no longer a debate" about this theory, it is because alternate viewpoints are being ig-

Medical Costs and How to Control Them

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who can not pay to those who can (i.e. premiums will continue to rise), or care will be rationed to control the cost.

The crisis of rising health care costs should not be dismissed, but to solve the problem, the real causes need to be addressed. Government health care does not seem to come close to this objective. But what is the solution?

Many remember a time when one's family doctor did house calls and it was manageable to pay out-of-pocket for care. The fees were reasonable. But today, despite the much higher cost of care, house calls are virtually unheard of. So what has happened between then and now to so dramatically change the average cost of care and the way medicine is now practiced?

There are multiple reasons for rising costs, such as the aging of the population, but the impact of insurance on cost is of special interest. It is both a major factor and amenable to change. For those who pay the full cost of their health insurance, there is no question that premiums bear an uncanny resemblance to a powerful vacuum that devours more and more of our annual revenue every year. Even though we find premiums heavily burdensome and make great sacrifices to pay them, few of us really know how the money is spent, and if most of the premium is actuarially justified. What percentage of the premium is wasted on unnecessary overhead?

Health insurance providers, which constitute a third party payment network, have become the middlemen of health care services. Most people buy their health care through them. We frequently feel a sense of security when the insurance company pays the bills, partly because it relieves perceived financial risk while also transferring the responsibility of negotiating with providers. Doctors are also somewhat satisfied because they have confidence that they will be reimbursed, even if the compensation is marginal.

But there is a huge cost for all

this comfort, as it is widely known that insurance bureaucracies impose a burdensome reimbursement system on the medical establishment; it is estimated that a whopping 50% of the cost of primary care in the United States is due to the administrative cost of insurance reimbursements. Additionally, enrollment in insurance can increase an individual's propensity to use health care services, especially when the insurance plan's out-of-pocket expense requirements are low. Since 1975, out-of-pocket expenditures have steadily decreased from 33% to 15% in 2005, a factor in the increased demand for medical services. More demand always equals more cost unless there is a commensurate adjustment in supply.

The National Bureau of Economic Research published a paper (No. 11619) by researcher Amy Finkelstein, indicating that insurance played a huge role in the increase in health care spending in the last half century. Finkelstein posits that insurance may be responsible for "at least 40% of that period's dramatic rise in real per capita health spending." She also estimates that Medicare brought a 23% increase in health care spending between 1965 and 1970, with even more dramatic increases through 1975. This increased demand for health related services is a factor in annual cost increases.

Although Medicare may technically not be insurance, both Medicare and private insurance companies are third party payment systems. And just as there is a distinction between your stock broker's interest and your own financial interest, the same holds true for a third party payer. Their bottom line multiplies with increasing premiums and decreasing pay-outs. If it is dangerous to trust in your stock broker's love for you, it is an illusion to think that an insurance company's primary financial incentive is in the reduction of your costs or in maximizing the quality of your care.

This fact, and the degree of added cost resulting from third party payment systems, are evident when a comparison is made with low cost



Your Government empathizes with your health care problems. No really, it does. Official White House photo by Pete Souza.

medical services in some states. The comparison suggests that where insurance networks are not as much of an influence on health care spending, costs are lower. Why? Because these lower cost services seem to be available in states with a high incidence of uninsured persons, like in Oklahoma.

There, remarkably, quality surgery services can be obtained for 10 to 50 percent of the cost at so-called nonprofit hospitals! For example, at the Surgery Center of Oklahoma, a

might inspire medical students at a time when only 2% are inclined to go into primary care. Dersch maintains that a direct payment system (as opposed to third party payment) gives doctors more of an incentive to take care of the patient, because the patient pays the bills.

In contrast, the third party payment system may result in situations where someone is not given tests that would discover a condition requiring expensive treatments; from the standpoint of the third-party payer,

As is often the case with cash-based practices, [Dr. Dersch's] patients have extraordinary access to her services; all have her personal phone number, and can contact her whenever they need to. Her patients pay a fraction of what insurance-based doctors would charge.

facility which is physician owned and controlled, special low pricing is offered for those paying cash in advance. The center offers a cochlear implant for only \$8,000, whereas the nearby hospital charges about \$80,000! A mastectomy costs \$4,550. A hernia ranges from \$2,150 to \$6,800. These prices include the facility, surgeon, and anesthesiologist's fees, as well as the cost of the initial consultation and simple follow-up care.

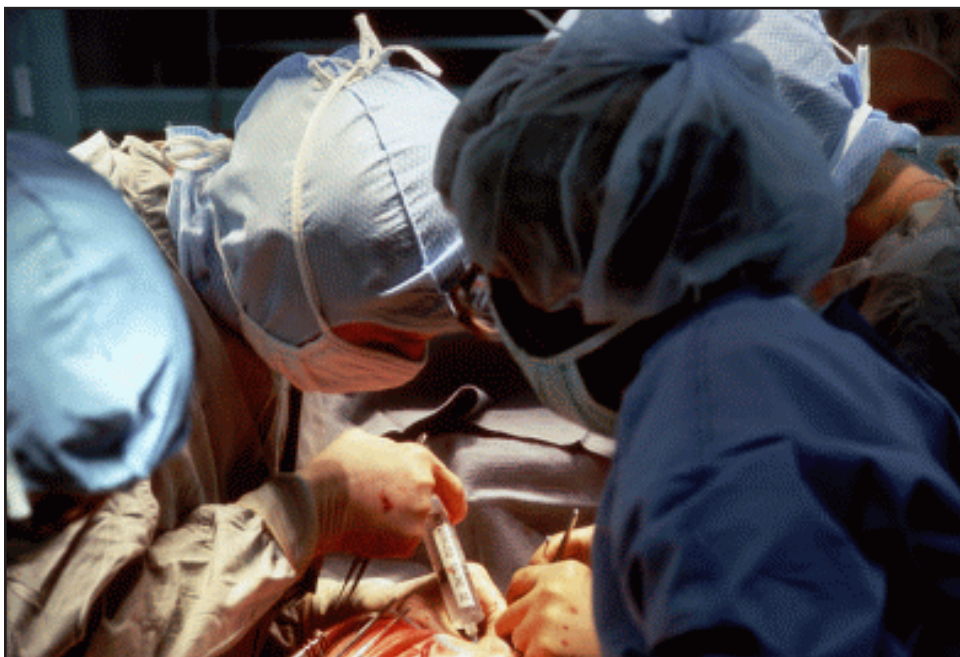
But you may ask, is this quality care? Reportedly, the preference of surgeons for this facility over hospital-based operating centers allows the Surgery Center to be selective in its choice of surgeons. A consequence of the center's quality of care and pricing, according to Dr. G. Keith Smith, is that patients are coming in significant numbers from Canada.

A similar phenomenon with respect to quality of care and pricing is seen in primary care, when doctors have adopted a cash-only payment structure. This is also referred to as "retainer" or "concierge" medicine. Dr. Juliette Madrigal Dersch is one of thousands of doctors nationwide who have adopted this practice model. Her testimony is intriguing, and

whether it is government controlled or not, this life-threatening curtailment of diagnostic care might be considered "cost-effective." All this is not to suggest that there are not decent people working in the insurance industry, or that patient care is always bad within the insurance network. Nevertheless, there are definitely practices which can maximize an insurance provider's profit which also tend to be at odds with the best patient care. In a society where morality is declining, that should concern us. On the other hand, direct-payment providers have an incentive to provide the best patient care per dollar spent, as the patient has more control as the sole payer. Under this scenario, it is in the physician's financial interest to satisfy the patient, not a third-party payer.

At Dr. Dersch's Texas-based direct-payment practice, patients rarely have to wait, and she is able to spend more time with them than insurance-based providers, who often must see a patient roughly every 15 minutes. As a result, she sometimes gets hard cases referred by other physicians, not because she is a more capable doctor, she says, but because she can

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The expertise required, the danger, and the liability costs make coronary bypass surgery one of the costliest medical procedures.

World-Wide Hot Air!

(Continued from Page 4)

points out that weather balloons have never found the expected "hot spot" warming pattern that would exist if global warming was caused by greenhouse gases.

Second, Nova observes that, "The strongest evidence was the ice cores, but newer, more detailed, data turned the theory inside out." Intensive scientific analysis of ice cores from the polar regions has suggested that, during the last 500,000 years, temperature increases have always preceded increases in greenhouse-gas levels. This would suggest that greenhouse-gas increases may be caused by temperature changes, which is the exact opposite of AGW theory.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, Nova writes that, "Temperatures are not rising." When you see a science show on television mentioning how global temperatures will rise several degrees in the next 50 years, the "experts" are relying on computer simulations. Most of the computer simulations from the 1990s expected continued temperature increases throughout the past decade, but instead, global temperatures have either decreased or remained constant. This happened, even though carbon-dioxide levels continued to increase.

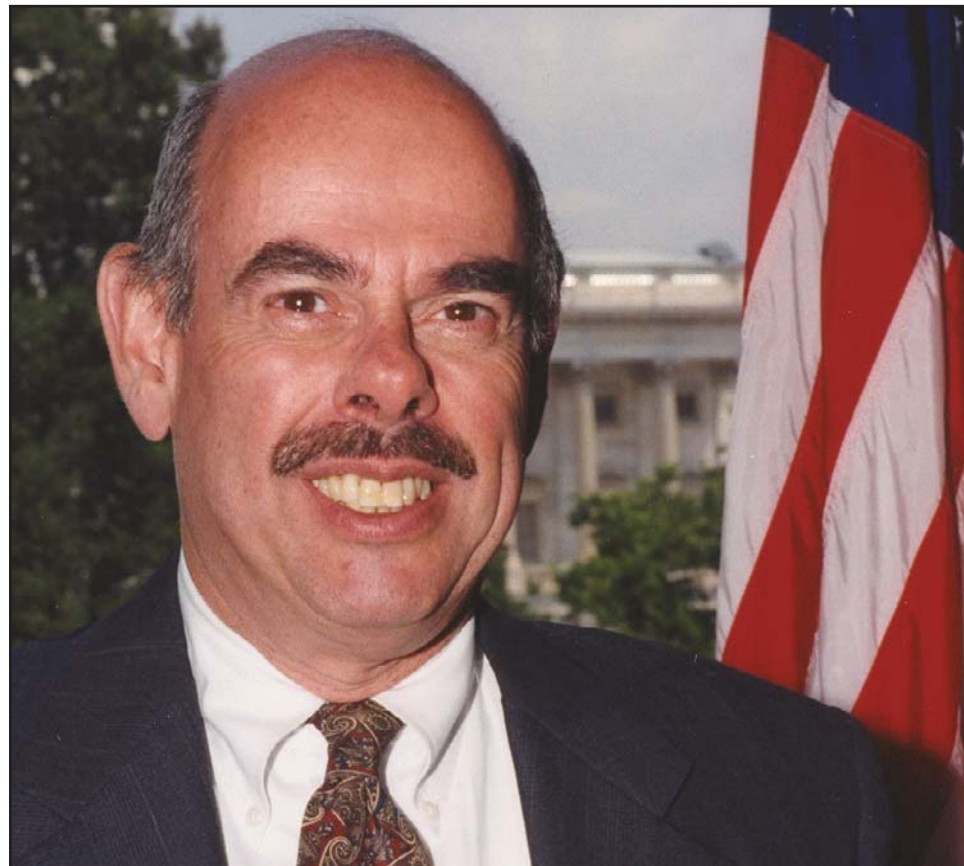
Some scientists claim that temperatures are rising, but satellite evidence does not support this statement. In fact, any recorded increase in temperatures is probably caused by invalid measurement techniques. Meteorologist David Paul

controls at measurement stations, not actual climate changes. If there were not a political agenda involved, all such data would be rejected outright and considered "junk science."

Nova's fourth observation is, "Carbon dioxide is already doing almost all the warming it can do." Doubling the level of carbon dioxide does not increase the warming effect. In fact, in past eons there may have been 10 times as much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as today and, despite that, the world still entered Ice Ages.

In fact, efforts to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can be harmful. While there has been a measurable increase in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere in recent decades, one of its most significant effects has been positive: an increase in plant populations worldwide. A fact that is frequently ignored in environmental rhetoric is carbon dioxide's role as an essential gas for plants. While animals breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide as a waste material, plant respiration works in reverse: plants receive carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and emit oxygen as a waste material. It would be species suicide for humanity to reduce carbon dioxide levels too much, as it can reduce the amount of plant life (including vegetables, grains, and fruit-bearing trees) that we rely on for our survival.

Even if there has been an increase in global temperatures, and the polar ice caps were melting, would



California Congressman Henry Waxman is a principle sponsor of the so-called "Cap-and-trade" legislation.

tures are caused by hydrocarbon emissions, then perhaps King David's horse was a gas guzzler.

Robinson et al. were able to cite heavily from 123 other publications, primarily papers in journals whose content very directly relates to climate science. One of the authors, Willie Soon, is a well-known astrophysicist who believes global warming is caused by solar activity.

The Little Ice Age was preceded by a warm period referred to as the "Medieval Warm Period" or "Medieval Climate Anomaly" (MCA, 800-1300 AD). In a recent article in the journal *Science* [Valerie Trouet, Jan Esper, Nicholas E. Graham, Andy Baker, James D. Scourse, and David C. Frank, "Persistent Positive North Atlantic Oscillation Mode Dominated the Medieval Climate Anomaly," *Science*, vol. 324, pp. 78-80 (3 April 2009)], the authors analyzed the MCA, noting that it is "the most recent natural counterpart to modern warmth and can therefore be used to test characteristic patterns of natural versus anthropogenic forcing."

Trouet and her co-authors concluded: "The persistent positive phase reconstructed for the MCA appears to be associated with prevailing La Nina-like conditions possibly initiated by enhanced solar irradiance and/or reduced volcanic activity...and amplified and prolonged by enhanced AMOC (Atlantic meridional overturning calculation). The relaxation from this particular ocean-atmosphere state into the LIA appears to be globally contemporaneous and suggests a notable and persistent reorganization of large-scale oceanic and atmospheric circulation patterns." In other words, natural phenomena, like solar and volcanic activity or ocean-current circulation patterns, caused climate change at the beginning and end of the MCA.

Some more recent data suggests that any climate change apparent on Earth is occurring elsewhere in the Solar system. For example, there has been evidence of global warming on

Mars and elsewhere in the solar system. This would suggest that any apparent recent climate change is caused by the sun and not by human activity. The last time I checked, nobody was driving SUVs on Mars.

In light of the disputed science, could there be another motive behind the Waxman-Markey bill? There are a few issues which lead this writer to question whether the politicians behind this legislation are serious about protecting the environment.

A most significant concern is whether such measures can be successful unless all industrialized nations participate. In July 2009, the G8 Summit announced a plan to limit global temperature increases to 2 degrees Celsius by 2050, by reducing carbon emissions by 80 percent. However, China and India both opposed the measure. These two nations are among the most prolific producers of greenhouse gases on Earth. By some estimates, they will be responsible for 34% of all greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030, and China is notorious for pollution. Without their cooperation, no global efforts to reduce carbon emissions will succeed. Are our elected officials ready to cease trade with these two nations until they get on board? After all, if anthropogenic global warming truly threatens the future of the human race, then we have a moral obligation to do whatever we can to encourage them to stop polluting. President Obama seems to be in no rush to break off our trade agreements with these nations, no matter how much they threaten the future of humanity. Perhaps Waxman-Markey is just another backhanded tactic to outsource more jobs to Third-World countries. Or, it is another tactic to allow the Obama Administration to gain stronger regulatory control over corporations. Maybe it is a combination of these two anti-American, unconstitutional endeavors.

It is certainly not a serious effort to increase the standard of living in

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cited a comprehensive study that "reveals stunning problems. Eight hundred and fifty-four (854) of the 1221 official climate monitoring stations across the country were surveyed and nearly 90% are not properly sited." Sensitive thermometers and other scientific data recorders, which should have been placed a safe distance from any man-made heat-producing devices, were often placed next to generators or air-conditioning units. Such placement invalidates the data obtained from these thermometers, because at least part of the measured temperature is being generated by such equipment.

Improper use of experimental or diagnostic equipment generates invalid data and, for most scientific studies, this would prohibit the research from passing the peer-review process of reputable journals. It is clear that the evidence for rising temperatures actually measures lax con-

that necessarily mean we are heading towards an apocalyptic climate change that would lead to mass extinctions? Not necessarily. Historical evidence suggests that our planet undergoes cycles of warming and cooling trends, regardless of human activity. In fact, according to a review article by Arthur B. Robinson, Noah E. Robinson, and Willie Soon ["Environmental Effects of Increased Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide," *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons*, vol. 12, pp. 79-90 (2007)], global temperatures have fluctuated between slightly below 22°C and slightly above 25°C over the last 3000 years. Currently, global temperatures are actually below average as our planet recovers from a period known as "the Little Ice Age" (LIA), which lasted between ca. 1500-1850. The highest temperatures in recent millennia seem to have occurred around 1000 BC. If high tempera-

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Zooming Costs...

(Continued from Page 5)

afford to spend the necessary time in diagnosis and treatment. As is often the case with cash-based practices, her patients have extraordinary access to her services; all have her personal phone number, and can contact her whenever they need to.

Her patients pay a fraction of what insurance-based doctors would charge. For example, Dersch charges \$15 for a complete blood count, while the local "charity" taxpayer-subsidized hospital charges \$79. She recently provided an MRI at a cost of only \$250, whereas a hospital would have charged \$1,200.

There are different types of cash-based practices. Some are pay-as-you-go, where you pay for services at the time of your visit. Some are mixed practices, where you pay a supplemental fee for services not included in Medicaid or insurance plans. Other concierge practices charge a monthly or annual fee. According to Dr. Thomas LaGrelus, president of the Society for Innovative Medical Practice Design (SIMP), those fees vary depending on the provider, and range from \$39 to \$1,000 per month, but average about \$150 per month.

As Dr. Dersch explains in *Emergency Medicine News*, "...my patients (wealthy and poor) pay far less at my office than they would at an ED (emergency department) or at another doctor's office. Ninety-five percent of adult visits are less than \$85, and 95 percent of child visits are under \$60, including labs. My patients also get a doctor who is board certified in two specialties and [get] immediate appointments, and they spend under 10 minutes in the waiting room and get an unrushed, comprehensive visit from a real doctor who knows them personally, a doctor who can even see patients for free and make house calls. For my part, I enjoy taking the time to treat my pa-



The latest high-tech equipment is another source of the increasing health costs.

tients as people, not symptoms, and though I see fewer than 20 patients a day and work four days a week, I can still provide a comfortable living for my family.

"I don't take insurance. I don't take Medicaid. I don't take Medicare. I have excised these non-medical aspects of medicine so that I may spend my time caring for my patients instead of trying to follow arbitrary, capricious, expensive, and cruel mandates from insurance and government that drive up costs, waste time, endanger health, and steal privacy. My calling is clear. I am a doctor. I work for my patients.

"The health care debate in America is a farce. Most health care money isn't spent on health care at all; it's paying \$16-million-a-year insurance company CEOs, it's paying tens of thousands of insurance employees whose sole purpose is to deny or delay patients' claims and whittle down doctors' reimbursements, it's paying additional staff hours to bill and code, and re-bill and re-code Medicare and insurance. The torrent of health care money passes through a giant sieve of bureaucrats and profiteers before a few meager drops trickle out to be used by patients to pay a caregiver.

"The real penalty is paid by the hardworking backbone of America,

Fear and lack of information lead some to embrace the concept of a government health care system. One thing is for sure, though. There would be little risk of implementing a national health care system if lawmakers respected the basic requirements of the U.S. Constitution.

the families with children who have been bamboozled into paying an insurance company \$800 a month for a privilege of a \$30 co-pay (when the insurance company pays the doctor just \$29 dollars for that visit), it's paid by the small business owner who is forced to add another 28 percent of the cost of each employee, it's paid by the mechanics, the laborers, the self-employed, who, when they visit an ED or charity hospital are gouged \$79 for a CBC lab that costs less than \$3."

The points that Dr. Dersch makes about the high overhead caused by insurance are common. The heavy burden of administering insurance program requirements cuts into the resources available for patient care. By working out of the insurance system, Dersch is able to recreate a medical environment that was once more common in America -- one where patients are able to get the attention and care from doctors that is commensurate with the money they are spending, and one that provides affordable and quality care for the uninsured.

These benefits of the cash-only medical practice are indicated in a number of ways. According to Dr. Thomas LaGrelus of SIMP, there is a 60% to 80% reduction in hospital time among patients participating in a concierge medical plan, and among concierge practices, cases of



Another reason it costs so much: the National Institutes of Health Mark O. Hatfield Clinical Research Center.

medical malpractice lawsuits have been unknown. As a result, he states that SIMPD has been able to negotiate medical malpractice rates for concierge doctors which are up to 55% lower than for doctors participating in insurance networks! These are two indicators that the health care provided by cash-only providers is much better, on average, than that offered through the insurance and Medicaid system.

many consider to be a solution for our nation's health care woes would likely worsen the situation. Taking the direction of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or the United Kingdom by implementing a national health care system would not only be unconstitutional, but would also endanger lives. Let us look at the case of women of ages 25 through 64 who have been detected early for breast cancer via mammograms. According to a May 2007 report by The Commonwealth Fund, in the four countries mentioned, the survival rates range from 58% to 77%, whereas in the U.S. they are 84% to 85%. These nationalized health systems are underperforming: either patients are not getting quality care, and/or that care is being excessively delayed.

The solution to our nation's health care problems is multifaceted, but includes preventing excessive government intervention that would create a situation that is worse than what we have now. The people are capable of using their ingenuity and capability, without government prodding, to greatly alleviate or eliminate many of the causes of waste in the present system. Removing the shackles which excessive regulation and interference cause, would accelerate the implementation of solutions. In some cases, however, the shackles are not put in place by an outside agency, but by ourselves.

Fear is sometimes the cause for this. For doctors, it may be fear of the consequences of stepping outside the insurance network; these may be sometimes justified, but not always. For individuals seeking patient care, it may be fear of the unknown, or lack of information about concierge medicine or providers (see www.simpd.org).

While these points are true, we should also be realistic. There is no doubt that Major Medical (less expensive high-deductible) insurance is usually important to have for catastrophic health problems and expensive medications, the costs of which are a major cause of personal bankruptcy nationwide. But as mentioned in the discussion above, basic pri-

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Unfortunately, the direction that

Health Costs

(Continued from Page 7)

Primary care should be affordable on a cash basis, and evidence indicates that cash-only primary care is more likely to keep people out of the hospital due to its higher quality, on average. This, in turn, puts downward pressure on major medical costs by decreasing the demand for those services.

Fear and lack of information lead some to embrace the concept of a government health care system. One thing is for sure, though. There would be little risk of implementing a national health care system if lawmakers respected the basic requirements of the U.S. Constitution. Since many are likely to view this as an odd statement, given the long-standing federal sponsorship of the Social Security and Medicare programs, let us examine this critical point.

Under Article I, Section 8, there is no legal authority for the federal government to raise revenue except to pay *the debts*, for *defense*, and for the *general welfare of the United States*. The last category is often misunderstood, because many fail to realize that the phrase "United States" is a legal term for the federal government, as contrasted with "the states" and "the people." This is



President Obama lecturing us at the White House Forum on Health Reform, March 5, 2009. Photo by Pete Souza.

played a major role in drafting the Constitution. The following is attributed to him: "With respect to the words general welfare ... To take them in a literal and unlimited sense would be a metamorphosis of the Constitution into a character which there is a host of proofs was not contemplated by its creators."

In 1791, Jefferson indicated that "general welfare of the United States" was correctly interpreted as referring to the welfare of the federal union: "To lay taxes to provide for the general welfare of the United

... the solution to much of our nation's dire problems involves returning to the wisdom and original intent of the founders. Doing so would curtail about 75 percent of our federal government's present expenditures, and the harmful policies associated with those expenditures -- in the domain of foreign policy, education, health care, and so on.

States They are not to lay taxes ad libitum for any purpose they please, but only to pay the debts or provide for the welfare of the Union."

In 1817, he explained the original intent -- that the authority to spend for the general welfare only extended to spending relating to the enumerated powers of the national government: "Our tenet ever was... that Congress had not unlimited powers to provide for the general welfare, but were restrained to those specifically enumerated." In 1825, he vigorously denounced the positions of the Republic's deconstructionists and called into question their motives: "Aided by a little sophistry on the words 'general welfare,' [the federal branch claims] a right to do not only the acts to effect that which are specifically enumerated and permitted, but whatsoever they shall think or pretend will be for the general welfare."

As in so many instances, it can be seen that the solution to much of our nation's dire problems involves returning to the wisdom and original intent of the founders. Doing so would curtail about 75 percent of our federal government's present expenditures, and the harmful policies as-

sociated with those expenditures -- in the domain of foreign policy, education, health care, and so on. The result would be the return of power to state governments and the people, and a transformation of our nation that would bring it more in line with the principle of subsidiarity. Until Americans come to realize that this is simply not a quaint thought that can be safely pushed aside at election time, we will continue to put our nation's vital interests in jeopardy, as well as our own personal interests.

The basic constitutional principles raised here are easily understood and respected by congressmen who are both competent and decent; the fact that we continually elect congressmen who do not respect our

basic law and the basic requirements of their oaths of office, indicates that we are electing people who grossly lack competency and/or decency. Either way, it is perilous to elect legislators who are absent either of these qualities.

There is great danger in this to the republic, but the danger becomes more intimate, more personal, when the subject becomes health care. I hope that you agree that trusting your health care to a congress composed largely of lawbreakers is both reckless and dangerous. And if anyone thinks that government is less corrupt and more effective -- especially in its present state -- than our nation's health insurance providers, then they should probably think again.

Global Warming...

(Continued from Page 6)

poor nations. Danish political scientist Bjorn Lomborg writes, "Carbon remains the only way for developing countries to work their way out of poverty. . . . No green energy source is inexpensive enough to replace coal now." In other words, if we reduce carbon emissions in an attempt to avoid a potential (but not definite) threat to humanity, we will certainly increase the levels of starvation and suffering in Third World nations. Can we truly believe that President Obama is concerned about the poor?

This is not to suggest that all efforts at protecting the environment are bad. Pollution certainly can be harmful. It is not healthy to breathe carbon-monoxide-laden smog, nor is it wise to drink polluted water. Local governmental agencies should protect the environment, in a manner that balances the needs of individuals and businesses with those of nature. Personally, I usually buy merchandise produced by environmentally-responsible companies when I have the chance; when many consumers do so, such personal responsibility will go a long way towards solving environmental problems. However, Waxman-Markey and related "cap-and-trade" bills will not save humanity from an Ice Age and therefore should be stopped.

The America First Party's platform endorses a transition from a fossil-fuel-based energy system to one founded on renewable energy sources. Solar, geothermal, nuclear, and wind energy all show promise. Unfortunately, at this time they are expensive or unreliable. Until technology advances to allow renewable energy to be a more efficient resource, we need a sound energy policy that meets the needs of people. Wise, efficient use of oil, coal, and other fossil fuels is necessary until technological advances make renewable energy sources cost-effective. Hysterical hyper-environmental panic will not help anybody.

The America First Party endorses a sound energy policy that relies on domestic production instead of leav-

ing us dependent on hostile nations. As long as we require fossil fuels, the America First Party proposes the following steps to ensure our nation's energy independence and promote more efficient use of our natural resources:

1. Eliminating the regulations which artificially impede or prohibit the production of oil from mapped, capped, off-shore, and marginal oil wells located in the lower 48 states and Alaska.

2. Uncapping the existing wells in the National Petroleum Reserve including Gull Island, which would allow us to produce another 1.5 million barrels per day of environmentally friendly low-sulfur oil.

3. Ensuring that all new oil production uses the most efficient and environmentally secure extraction technologies available.

4. Impose a \$20 per barrel oil price support provision to protect our industry from OPEC's predatory pricing practices.

5. Encourage the use of clean coal, safe nuclear, wind, biomass incineration, and other existing electric-

Hysterical hyper-environmental panic will not help anybody.

ity generation technologies so as to allow petroleum and natural gas supplies to be more readily available for consumer usage at reasonable prices.

6. Promote the construction of new coal gasification, bio-diesel, and oil refinery capacity within the United States and increase tariffs on imported refined petroleum products.

Energy policy should be drafted in such a way that it balances environmental concerns with the needs of consumers and businesses. Unfortunately, ACES makes grandiose promises to the environment, which it will be unable to keep, while guaranteeing hardship for manufacturers and energy-producing companies and a lower standard of living for American consumers. This is not the foundation of wise energy policy.