

U.S. Sen. Johnson: Outlines health care concerns in New York Times

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) outlined his concerns about the Senate health care bill in an op-ed published in the *New York Times* Monday. Sen. Johnson's op-ed [can be found here](#) and below.

Where the Senate Health Care Bill Fails

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson

New York Times

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<https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/06/26/opinion/senate-health-care-bill.html>

Speaking at a rally for his wife's presidential campaign last year, Bill Clinton called Obamacare "the craziest thing in the world." As he put it, "The people who are out there busting it, sometimes 60 hours a week, wind up with their premiums doubled and their coverage cut in half."

Mr. Clinton was right, and it's why Republicans have been pushing to repair the damage done by Obamacare for so long. Our priority should be to bring relief, and better, less expensive care, to millions of working men and women.

Unfortunately, the Senate Republican alternative, unveiled last week, doesn't appear to come close to addressing their plight. Like Obamacare, it relies too

heavily on government spending, and ignores the role that the private sector can and should play.

As an accountant with more than 30 years' experience in manufacturing, I assure you the private sector is much more effective at solving problems. Concepts like the "KISS" principle ("keep it simple, stupid"), pursuing continuous improvement and root-cause analysis are core ideas in private-sector problem-solving. From what I've seen in six years in office, these concepts are foreign to government.

The decades-long health care debate is an example. Layer upon layer of laws, rules and regulations have made our health care-financing system a complex mess, separating patients from direct payment for health care.

As a result, patients neither know nor care what things cost. We have virtually eliminated the power of consumer-driven, free-market discipline from one-sixth of our economy.

The primary goals of any health care reform should be to restrain (if not lower) costs while improving quality, access and innovation. This is exactly what consumer-driven, free-market competition does in other areas of our economy. Look no further than how laser eye surgery went from exotic to affordable during the years it was not covered by most insurance.

Washington believes that the solution to every problem is more money. But throwing more money at insurers won't fix the lack of consumer-driven competition, combined with government mandates that artificially drive up the cost of care and insurance.

Obamacare imposes enormous taxes and plans to spend nearly \$2 trillion over the next 10 years to decrease the number of uninsured, mostly through Medicaid but also through taxpayer-subsidized exchanges. In doing so, Obamacare has largely destroyed an already struggling individual health insurance marketplace. It does this by mandating high-cost provisions as standard for every insurance policy, then forcing a small percentage of the population to shoulder the cost. These are the people Mr. Clinton was talking about.

Prior to Obamacare, the individual market was already challenged by unequal tax treatment, which forced the forgotten to pay for insurance with after-tax dollars. The simple solution would have been to equalize the tax treatment, but President

Obama chose to spend trillions and artificially increase premiums unaffordably. The result: Too many of those individuals who are “busting it” and who responsibly carried insurance can no longer afford it, have dropped coverage, are paying a penalty and are taking a huge risk.

Once again, a simple solution is obvious. Loosen up regulations and mandates, so that Americans can choose to purchase insurance that suits their needs and that they can afford.

Like many other senators, I had hoped that this was where things were headed during the last several weeks as the Republican bill was discussed. We’re disappointed that the discussion draft turns its back on this simple solution, and goes with something far too familiar: throwing money at the problem.

The bill’s defenders will say it repeals Obamacare’s taxes and reduces Medicaid spending growth. That’s true. But it also boosts spending on subsidies, and it leaves in place the pre-existing-condition rules that drive up the cost of insurance for everyone.

Instead, we should return more flexibility to states, to give individuals the freedom and choice to buy plans they want without Obamacare’s “reforms.” And we should look to improve successful models for protecting individuals with pre-existing conditions, models underway prior to Obamacare, such as those in Maine and Wisconsin.

Only then can the market begin to rein in the underlying cost of health care itself and reduce the cost of taxpayer subsidies.

We are \$20 trillion in debt. The Congressional Budget Office projects an additional \$129 trillion of accumulated deficits over the next 30 years. A truly moral and compassionate society does not impoverish future generations to bestow benefits in the here and now.

Republican leaders have told us the plan unveiled last week is a draft, open to discussion and improvement. I look forward to working with Senate leadership and the president to improve the bill so it addresses the plight of the forgotten men and women by returning freedom and choice to health care.

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