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**Time for the truth-o-meter**

One of the fascinating and frustrating things about the current uncivilized turn in the debate over health care reform is how provisions and issues that have been in the public and political area for some time without controversy have suddenly become intolerable problems.

Some examples:

During the election campaign, Barack Obama and Joe Biden made health care reform a central tenet of their election platform and spent considerable time and detail outlining how it would work. It is still up on their website (<http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/HealthCareFullPlan.pdf>) for everyone to read, in pretty simple language. What is outlined there is very little different to what is in the legislation before the Congress – there are certainly no surprises. So why are Republicans shocked that the President is intent on implementing an election promise, more or less as he outlined it?

The Dean of the House, John Dingell, has had a national health insurance bill for every one of the 54 years he has been in the Congress. In that time, the bill has been updated regularly, introduced early in every new Congress, been mentioned in thousands of Dingell speeches and remarks, and Dingell has faced voters in the 16<sup>th</sup> district of Michigan 26 times. So why are they now screaming at him and calling him a fraud?

The opponents of health care reform have made much of the provision in the legislation that would provide Medicare reimbursement to doctors who provide Advanced Care Consultations to patients. They claim this is euthanasia, akin to Hitler's final solution. But the Medicare End-of-Life Care Planning Act of 2007 had three Republican co-sponsors, Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) Sen. John Isakson (R-GA) Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN) . That bill has been reintroduced several times since, each time with Republican support. Why is this now seen as Obama's death panel?

In 2003, Republicans John Boehner, Charles Grassley and John Isakson were among over 200 Republicans who voted for a bill which provided coverage for "counseling the beneficiary with respect to end-of-life issues and care options, and advising the beneficiary regarding advanced care planning."

The only difference between the 2003 provision and the current one that's inspired euthanasia talk from these very members is that the earlier one applied only to terminally ill patients.

The unwillingness of the opponents of reform to use the facts was demonstrated in a recent News Hour interview ([http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/health/july-dec09/health\\_08-13.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/health/july-dec09/health_08-13.html)). Dick Arney, chairman of FreedomWorks, an organisation which is actively protesting health care reform, claimed the Congressional Budget Office had found that 100 million American would lose their employer-provided insurance under the House bill. In fact, the CBO figure is that 9 million people, many of them already unemployed, would seek health cover through the public plan.

Together with several colleagues at the Center for American Progress I have spent the past week pulling together a response to every one of the 120 charges that have been made about the bill. You can read them here (<http://www.americanprogressaction.org/issues/2009/08/pdf/120healthcaremyths.pdf>).

There are now a number of independent sites that will show you where the pointer lies on the truth-o-meter. See for example Politifact.com (<http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2009/aug/13/health-care-fact-checks-greatest-hits-vol-1/>).

And if you want to make up your own mind about what's in the bill, you can read that, in non-legislative language, here (<http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2009/aug/13/health-care-reform-simple-explanation/>).