

## **Health Care - Legislators for Sale** - Keith Olbermann - 8/3/09

Members of Congress fail to represent constituents in health care fight

Finally tonight, as promised, a Special Comment on Health Care Reform in this country, and in particular, the "public insurance option." In March of 1911, after a wave of minor factory fires in New York City, the City's Fire Commissioner issued emergency rules about fire prevention, protection, escape, sprinklers. The City's Manufacturers Association in turn called an emergency meeting to attack the Fire Commissioner and his 'interference with commerce.'

The new rules were delayed. Just days later, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. The door to the fire escape was bolted shut to keep the employees from leaving prematurely. One hundred and fifty of those employees died, many by jumping from the seventh floor windows to avoid the flames. Firefighters setting up their ladders literally had to dodge the falling, often burning, women. This was the spirit of the American corporation then. It is the spirit of the American corporation now. It is what the corporation will do, when it is left alone, for a week. You know the drill. We all know the drill.

You get something done, at a doctor's, at a dentist's, at an emergency room and the bills are in your hands before the pain medication wears off. And if you're one of the lucky ones, and you have insurance, you submit the endless paperwork and no matter whether it's insurance through your company, or your union, or your non-profit, or on your own dime, you then get your turn... at the roulette wheel.

How much of it is the insurance company going to pay this time? How much of it is the insurance company — about which you have next to no choice, and against which you have virtually no appeal — how much is this giant corporation going to give you back? What small percentage of what they told you they were going to pay you, will they actually pay you? You know the answer. And, you know the answer if you don't have insurance. But do you know why that's the answer?

Because the insurance industry owns the Republican Party. Not exclusively. Pharma owns part of it, too. Hospitals and HMO's, another part. Nursing homes — they have a share. You name a Republican, any Republican, and he is literally brought to you by... campaign donations from the Health Sector.

Sen. John Thune of South Dakota? You gave the Republican rebuttal to the President's weekly address day before yesterday. You said the Democrats' plan was for... *"...government run health care that would disrupt our current system, and force millions of Americans who currently enjoy their employer-based coverage into a new health care plan run by government bureaucrats."*

That's a bald-faced lie, Senator. And you're a bald-faced liar, whose bald face is covered by...your own health care plan run by government bureaucrats. Nobody would be forced into anything; and the Public Insurance Option is no more a disruption than letting the government sell you water, and not just Poland Spring and Sparkletts. But, as corrupt hypocrites go, Senator, at least you're well paid. What was that one statement worth to you in contributions from the Health Sector, Sen. Thune? Five thousand dollars? Ten? We know what you are, Sir, we're arguing about the price. What about your other quote? *"We can accomplish health care reform while keeping patients and their doctors in charge, not bureaucrats and politicians."* Wow, Senator — this illustrates how desperate you and the other Republicans are, right? Because Sen. Thune, if you really think *"bureaucrats and politicians"* need to get out of the way of *"patients and their doctors,"* then you support a woman patient's right to get an abortion, and you supported Michael Schiavo's right to take his wife off life support, and you oppose "bureaucrats and politicians" getting in the way, and we'll just mark you down on the pro-choice list. That's a rare misstep for you Sen. Thune. No twelve-thousand dollar payoff for that statement! I am not being hyperbolic, am I, Senator? On the money? Sen. Thune has thus far received from the Health Sector, campaign contributions — and all these numbers tonight are from "The Center For Responsive Politics" — campaign contributions amounting to one million, \$206,176. So much for Sen. Thune.

How about Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite? Good evening Ma'am. You are the Florida representative who claimed on the Floor that Democrats had... *"...released a health care bill which essentially said to America's seniors: drop dead."*

Now those are strong, terrorizing, words — that's exactly what your Insurance and Medical Overlords wanted to hear. But are you truly worth every dollar of the \$369,000,255 of them you have received over the years from the Health Sector? I'd read the rest of the operative part of your speech myself, but your rendition actually cannot be matched: *"Listen up, America, seniors have special needs. This bill ignored the, ignores the needs of Florida's health care system."*

*We should be fixing what is broke. Not disseminate, disseminating, decimating, the care of our senior population.” -- July 21, 2009*

You can always tell, can't you, Congresswoman, when the hostage is reading her own ransom note, and when she is reading one written for her? So much for Rep. Brown-Waite. There are so many other Republicans, bought and sold — like the unfortunate Congresswoman there — by the Health Sector. Minority Leader McConnell of the Senate? Rep. Bart Gordon of Tennessee. Congressman? Undecided on the public option? At \$1,173,000 in donations from the Health Sector, I'm surprised. You should have already said no — and loudly. The only thing you should be "undecided" about, is whether or not you're really a Democrat. So much for Rep. Gordon.

Sen. Max Baucus of Montana. Good evening, Senator. So you're supposed to be negotiating all this out with the Republicans and hesitant Democrats? To gain bi-partisanship with a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Health Sector? Bi-partisanship that will get you, what? A total of no votes? And your price has been, let's see \$414,000 in donations from Hospitals. About \$667,000 from the insurance companies and just over a million from Big Pharma. There was a \$1,300,000 from other health professional and \$237,000 from Nursing Homes.

When you think of getting \$237,000 in campaign contributions from nursing homes, Sen. Baucus, do you ever think about whether they subtract that amount of money evenly from all the patients suffering and dying in the lousy ones, or just from a few of the lousy ones? So much for Sen. Baucus. Sadly, this list could go on almost all night, too. I could ask Blue Dog Congressman, Democrat John Tanner of Tennessee, if, since he's gotten \$215,000 from hospitals over the years, if I and the appropriate number of my friends were willing to make it \$216,000, if we could buy his vote — or would there have to be an auction?

We could bring up Senator Hagan, and Congressman Pomeroy, who, at \$628,000, appears to represent the Insurance Industry and not North Dakota. I could bring up Sen. Carper, and Sen. Blanche Lincoln.

Senator Lincoln? By the way, considering how you're obstructing health care reform, how do you feel... every time you actually see Sen. Kennedy? I could bring up all the other Democrats doing their masters' bidding in the House or the Senate, all the others who will get an extra thousand from somebody if they just postpone the vote

another year, another month, another week, because right now without the competition of a government-funded insurance company, in one hour the health care industries can make so much money that they'd kill you for that extra hour of profit, I could call them all out by name.

But I think you get the point. We don't need to call the Democrats holding this up Blue Dogs. That one word "*Dogs*" is perfectly sufficient. But let me speak to them collectively, anyway. I warn you all. You were not elected to create a Democratic majority. You were elected to restore this country. You were not elected to serve the corporations and the trusts who the government has enabled for the last eight years.

You were elected to serve the people. And if you fail to pass or support this legislation, the full wrath of the progressive and the moderate movements in this country will come down on your heads. Explain yourselves not to me, but to them. They elected you, and in the blink of an eye, they will replace you. If you will behave as if you are Republicans — as if you are the prostitutes of our system — you will be judged as such. And you will lose not merely our respect. You will lose your jobs!

Every poll, every analysis, every vote, every region of this country supports health care reform, and the essential great leveling agent of a government-funded alternative to the unchecked duopoly of profiteering private insurance corporations. Cross us all at your peril. Because, Rep. Ross, you are not the Representative from Blue Cross.

And Mr. Baucus, you are not the Senator from Schering-Plough Global Health Care even if they have already given you \$76,000 towards your re-election. And Ms. Lincoln, you are not the Senator from DaVita Dialysis.

Because, ladies and gentlemen, President Lincoln did not promise that this nation shall have a new death of freedom, and that government of the corporation, by the corporation, for the corporation, shall not perish from this earth. Good night and good night and good luck.

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