

Solutions through freedom, not control

Cato Ads, Conference Highlight Health Care Battle

The nation's health care system is in desperate need of change. Costs are growing to unsustainable levels, and millions of Americans are without health insurance. President Obama and Democrats in Congress have a plan to address this, one they are pushing with all their political capital. But theirs is not the only voice.

The Cato Institute is undertaking nationwide outreach on how free-market reforms, increased consumer choice, and energized competition—not more government control—will improve the quality and affordability of health care.

On July 23, full-page newspaper ads ran in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. The ad (pictured opposite) provides information on a “uniquely American solution: freedom. Freedom to



The Cato Institute's July 17 Conference on Health Care Reform brought together health care experts from across the political spectrum for a day of debate and discussion. Rep. Paul Ryan proposed an alternative path to better health care, one that embraces the market rather than government control. Harvard Business School's Regina Herzlinger discussed greater provider specialization as a solution to the problem of health care delivery.

choose your doctor and health plan. Freedom to spend your health care dollars as you choose. Freedom to make your own medical decisions. Freedom to keep a health plan you are satisfied with.”

A large advertisement for the Cato Institute. It features a caricature of Uncle Sam dressed as a doctor, wearing a white lab coat and a stethoscope, with a red cross on his top hat. He is pointing directly at the viewer. The text reads: "YOUR NEW DOCTOR?" in large blue letters. Below this, it says: "When it comes to health care, what really matters is who decides. Under reform proposals before Congress, government would take over more and more of your health care decisions. Whatever it's called—socialized medicine... government-run health care... 'a public plan'... individual & employer mandates—it's bad medicine." It then lists four bullet points: "• REDUCE HEALTH CARE QUALITY", "• INCREASE COSTS", "• LIMIT CHOICES OF DOCTORS", and "• INCREASE THE FEDERAL DEFICIT". Below the list, it says: "There is a better, uniquely American solution: freedom. Freedom to choose your doctor and health plan. Freedom to spend your health care dollars as you choose. Freedom to make your own medical decisions. Freedom to keep a health plan you are satisfied with." The main headline of the ad is "HEALTH CARE REFORM IS NEEDED. BUT A GOVERNMENT TAKEOVER IS NOT THE ANSWER." It also includes the website "VISIT HEALTHCARE.CATO.ORG" and the Cato Institute logo. At the bottom, it says "PAID FOR BY THE CATO INSTITUTE WWW.CATO.ORG" and a small note: "Washington Post-ABC News Poll, June 18-21, 2009."

Spearheaded by full-page ads in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and other major newspapers, the Cato Institute is undertaking nationwide outreach on how free-market reforms, increased consumer choice, and energized competition—not more government control—improve health care's quality and affordability. Beyond the newspaper campaign, Cato is running ads on radio stations and has launched a new web site of key resources at healthcare.cato.org.

In addition to its print campaign, Cato is reaching out to the American public through radio stations and a new website (healthcare.cato.org) featuring key health care resources.

Although the outreach campaign is intended to bring the message of freedom-based reform to a national audience, Cato has not lost sight of the need to educate specialists, as well. On June 17, the Cato Institute hosted a day-long conference on health care to provide a platform for ideas from across the political spectrum. The confer-

ence opened with remarks from Cato president Ed Crane and closed with a discussion of free-market alternatives to the calls for greater government control. Between were five addresses and panels made up of nearly two dozen speakers and experts. Among these were Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI), who discussed the impacts of various health care reforms, and Rep. Michael C. Burgess, M.D. (R-TX), and Rep. Jason Altmire (D-PA), who laid out their visions of the path health care should take.

Panel discussions addressed such impor-

tant questions as whether Congress should mandate coverage, how the health care delivery systems could be reformed, and the need—or lack of it—for a government health insurance program. Michael D. Tanner, senior fellow at the Cato Institute and coauthor of *Healthy Competition: What's Holding Back*



Karen Tumulty, Gail Wilensky, and Karen Davenport answer audience questions during a panel discussion on the government's proposed public option plan at the Cato Institute's Conference on Health Care Reform on June 17.

Health Care and How to Free It (a book given out to all conference attendees), called individual mandates a “unique and unprecedented violation of individual liberty and choice,” while Jon Kingsdale, executive director of the Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector, argued that mandates have functioned well in Massachusetts.

After a full day of discussion, debate, and the exchange of ideas, it was clear that health care is a more complicated issue than politicians in Washington would have us believe. If we are to improve America's health care, we need to be aware of that complexity. Cato's health care conference did just that. And if we are to build a health care system we can live with, we need to examine all the reform options—options Cato's nationwide outreach program is bringing to the attention of the American public.

The newspaper and radio ads, video of the conference, and other information on health care reform can be found at healthcare.cato.org.



In July, the debate over health care reached fever pitch, and no one was hotter than Cato's own Michael Tanner. While politicians in Washington argued about how best to expand government control over the health decisions of all Americans, Tanner penned op-eds in major newspapers across the country—four in the *New York Post* alone—keeping alive the important message that it is liberty, not federal control, that will improve America's health.