Health Care Reform May be Taxing

By Reg P. Wydeven
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President Obama is committed to reforming America's health care system. The reform proposal has lots of radical changes to the current system in an effort to provide adequate, affordable health care to all Americans.

Because of some of the significant changes to the current system in the reform bills, the President's proposal has been met with some resistance. Critics claim the reforms will result in long lines and long waits for health care, and random doctor assignments instead of a consistent family doctor.

One of the biggest concerns about the proposal is the end of life counseling, which opponents characterize as the euthanizing of seniors to decrease the high expense of their health care. But clearly, the biggest concern of the health care reform bill is the proposed tax on non-diet sodas.

The government somehow has to pay for these health care reforms, and experts claim a 10 cent tax on each can of non-diet soda could generate $140 billion in revenue over ten years. Obesity is a fast growing problem in the U.S., and the high cost of health care for health issues related to obesity is growing just as rapidly.

Overweight Americans suffer from diabetes, hypertension, high blood pressure, heart disease and joint replacement – all expensive maladies to treat. Taxing sugary soft drinks will increase revenue for the program, while discouraging people to buy soda, which should decrease obesity and save on health care costs.

With the economic woes our country is facing and the corresponding budget cuts for all levels of government, lots of creative "fees" are emerging to make ends meet. Instead of blatantly raising taxes, many states are assessing fees to specific items and services. For example, California's state legislature shelved a bill proposing to legalize marijuana, which potentially could become the state's biggest cash crop. The bill proposed to tax pot by $50 per ounce, which could raise an estimated $1 billion a year in state taxes.

Last month, Oakland became the first U.S. city to tax proceeds on medical marijuana. The state of Georgia voted down a bill for a "pole tax" that would have charged patrons of strip clubs a $5 entrance fee. Nineteen states have explored gambling-related proposals as ways to balance their 2010 budgets, including Delaware's new law that created a sports lottery that legalized single-game betting.

The state of New York shot proposed taxes on manicures, health clubs and bowling. Kentucky taxes cell phone ring tones. Here in Wisconsin, Governor Doyle's 2010 budget would triple the price of an elk hunting license, even though we have no elk hunting season. All levels of government have cranked up taxes on tobacco products and alcohol.

I don't have a problem with any of these proposed taxes because I don't use marijuana, go to strip clubs, gamble, get manicures, bowl or hunt. It's perfectly acceptable to tax other people's vices, but when the government wants to tax mine, that's absolutely unacceptable. If the reform is adopted, a case of Mountain Dew will go up by $2.40!

Thankfully the beverage industry is opposing the bill with me. Lobbyists are planning on furnishing Congress with numerous studies showing that soda is perfectly healthy. Of course, the studies were conducted by Dr. Pepper.

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