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Health Care: News and Information is a service of the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) to help our readers stay fully informed about the latest health care issues as we work to advance a high-quality health care system.

Jim Edwards, Editor

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Wisconsin Health Reform Experiment Receives Heavy Criticism

The Wisconsin state senate is pushing its own version of "universal" health care. The tax increases it would take to fund this experiment are eye-opening – not to mention wallet-opening.

- The Wall Street Journal, commenting on the Badger State plan, called it "a Petri dish for government-run health care."
- What's purported as "free" health coverage for everybody in Wisconsin below retirement age carries a price tag one-fourth greater than the total the state takes in today.
- A look at what Wisconsin is pushing should serve as a warning for the country when policy makers advocate single-payer health care.

Wisconsin's lawmakers have created a health plan that will inevitably generate a hefty price tag..

- Every state resident there for at least 12 months who's under 65 would be covered.
- The Journal pointed out that the lax qualification standards in the Wisconsin plan could turn the state into "a mecca for the unemployed, uninsured and sick."
- Wisconsin state government would be the single payer for this coverage.
- The Wisconsin approach rejects market-based consumer choice and competition. For instance, it prohibits health savings accounts and increases the expanse of government-mandated medical services that must be provided.

As it turns out, though, "free" health care sure isn't cheap. Look at all the tax increases Wisconsin lawmakers would impose to pay for single-payer health care.

- Total price tag of the Wisconsin plan: \$15.2 billion. That's \$3 billion more than all the state's revenue from sales, income and corporate taxes.
- Wisconsin workers would face a tax increase of \$510 a month to pay for the "universal" coverage.

- There'll be a new 14.5 percent tax on wages aimed at employers. There are new taxes and fees on hospitals, trucks, cars, real estate sales, dry cleaners, oil companies, plus a 10 percent corporate tax increase.
- A "tax escalator clause" indexes automatic tax hikes.

Wisconsin's senate would give that state's residents the same end result as any single-payer plan – rationed care, price controls and state officials micromanaging health care. The Journal noted that this is the certain result when the government takes over health care. Governments have few other mechanisms for controlling costs: "Rationing via price controls and, as costs rise, waiting periods and coverage restrictions."

The Healthcare Leadership Council, representing the innovators in each sector of the health care industry, is committed to advancing a market-based health care system that values innovation and provides affordable, high-quality care.

HLC field directors:

Steve Knuth (651) 225-8449
(IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, WI)

Darren Katz (404) 885-9351
(AL, FL, GA, SC)

Paul Pearson (405) 488-0541
(AZ, CO, KS, NE, NM, OK, TX, UT)

Brad Crone (919) 834-8994
(KY, MD, NC, TN, VA, WV)

Larry Krutchik (818) 728-3355
(CA, ID, MT, NV, OR, WA)

Brian Feldman (404) 885-1723
(AR, CT, LA, MA, MO, MS, NY, RI)

Tom Maher (603) 228-3342
(DE, ME, NH, NJ, OH, PA, VT)

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**Healthcare Leadership Council
1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 550 South
Washington, DC 20004
(202) 452-8700
www.hlc.org**