

The high cost of our privatized electoral system

It's not "political ideology," it's campaign CASH!

By Jack E. Lohman

Our health care crisis is a scary thing, and indeed it should be. It is a major fiscal threat among many major fiscal threats, all due to our corrupt political system. We cannot be proud of our government leaders for this.

At the state level the Republicans had every chance to save businesses upwards of \$2 billion and implement Healthy Wisconsin for its citizens, yet they blocked it instead. With \$600,000 in campaign contributions from the insurance industry, it's easy to see why they preferred industry solutions.

But we'll remember them in the 2008 elections, especially Assembly Leader *Mike Huebsch* and health vice-chairman *Leah Vukmir*, both of whom couldn't or wouldn't get their facts straight.

Congressional Republicans -- including U.S. Reps *Jim Sensenbrenner* and *Paul Ryan* -- didn't do much better as they "compassionately" voted against expansion of the SCHIP children's health care program. Too much money, they claimed, but that didn't stop them from voting for a \$780 billion giveaway to the drug industry's Medicare D program -- which, incidentally, prohibits Medicare from negotiating with the drug manufacturers to save Medicare money. The VA system cut its costs by 50%, but that's not what the Republicans want of Medicare.

With a straight face they are attacking Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security as the "entitlements that will bankrupt America," and given the payola going into their pockets that may indeed become the case. Their motives are to kill the efficiency of government programs so they can justify privatizing it all, of course giving it to their corporate buddies to profit from.

They've already started that process with the privatized side of Medicare -- Medicare Advantage, sometimes called Medicare HMOs -- of which 19% of Medicare patients have been sold but which costs taxpayers about 20% more than traditional Medicare.

It is not a pretty picture.

But it doesn't have to be that way. We'd have the money to support all of these programs if politicians would simply start spending it wisely and quit giving it to their

campaign contributors in tax breaks for the wealthy, corporate subsidies, pork and bridges to nowhere. When politicians look at their priorities, getting re-elected tops their list, and campaign money gets them there faster than anything else. They can hoodwink voters, but not contributors.

The solution is campaign finance reform. Full public financing of campaigns. Get private money out of the political system and the rest will take care of itself. We'll see health care fixed overnight, budgets balanced, pork and needless subsidies abolished, and taxes reduced for all but the very rich.

If politicians are to vote in the best interest of their funders, those funders should be the taxpayers. And it'd be a bargain. For just \$5 per taxpayer per year, and \$10 per taxpayer at the federal level, we'd eliminate the \$1300 and \$3000 per taxpayer per year in giveaways the politicians send to their campaign contributors. And because the system is optional for the candidate, it is constitutional. They can choose to take either public or private money.

It's not new, and has been in operation in Arizona and Maine for over 5 years, and more recently Connecticut and North Carolina have joined the fold. Arizona and Maine have roughly 70% of their politicians elected under the Clean Money system. It's not just clean, it's refreshing.

If I had an employee taking money on the side from a vendor he was giving corporate assets to, I'd fire him. Perhaps even have him jailed. Why do we tolerate politicians who do the same thing?

Resources:

www.ThrowTheRascalsOut.org (political advocacy)

www.BusinessCoalition.net Business Coalition for Single-Payer Healthcare (a founding member)

www.MoneyedPoliticians.com/ (Book site: "Politicians - Owned and Operated by Corporate America")

www.WiCleanElections.org (Describes the benefits of public funding of campaigns)

Blog: <http://MoneyedPoliticians.net>

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