

No Deal by Januario Azarcon, Esq.

Riding on his high popularity ratings propelled by the euphoric atmosphere of his inauguration, Pres. Barack Obama demanded of Congress to pass his so-called health care reform. It must be done before the August recess. That was his deadline.

He was counting that the sheer power of his oratory would waltz any opposition to his agenda. With the Republicans still reeling from the sting of the 2008 election defeat, the president calculated that Congress will just swallow his demands hook, line and sinker. It did not happen. The medicine was just too bitter that even some members of his party refused to swallow.

The proposed plan to overhaul the U.S. health care system was estimated to cost at least a trillion dollars in ten years. And yet, the president wanted to rush it through before most members of Congress could even read the bill. Even the president acknowledges that he has not read either the House or the Senate version and yet he wants us to accept them.

Pres. Obama promises that the cost of the proposed health care reform will not add to the budget deficit. It's either he is fooling himself, fooling the public, hallucinating or his calculator is broken. The Director of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, Douglas Elmendorf told the Senate Budget Committee that the plan would not reduce federal spending on health care, on the contrary it will expand the federal responsibility for health care costs.

Who should we believe, the president or the head of a nonpartisan office appointed by Democrats and who is a Democrat himself? When he was pushing for the passage of the \$750+ Billion stimulus package, the president said that the economy was so bad that it needs an urgent jolt or the unemployment will rise above 8%. Over a month after the stimulus bill was passed, he said that the economy was not as bad as he thought. And then comes good old Vice Pres. Joe Biden who said that "our numbers were wrong, our assumptions were wrong."

As it turns out now, the stimulus package that was supposed to provide an immediate jolt to the economy is flowing like molasses with not even ten percent spent for job creation projects. And the honest to goodness Veep Joe Biden says that some of that will go to waste. Notwithstanding the stimulus package, unemployment climbed above 8%.

Why then should the people now take the President at his word when we have already seen that you cannot take his word to the bank? Why the rush? Because the people at the White House are smart. The way it is packaged now, it will

only stand a chance if it can be done before people understand what will hit them in the future.

The longer the debate, the more questions the administration has to answer to an increasingly cynical public. Who is going to pay for the reported 40 Million uninsured? Supposedly the money will come from people earning more than \$350,000 a year. There is now talk that it will only hit the millionaires. Are there enough millionaires to tax? What is the economic impact of raising income taxes even for the wealthy? The last time there was an across-the-board tax cut under Pres. G. W. Bush, it resulted in an increase in the share of income tax revenue paid by the high bracket tax payers. This plan for a massive tax increase to cover the uninsured is hardly a stimulus to encourage investment by those who have the means to invest and contribute to job creation.

The administration is also talking about funding health care reform from Medicare and Medicaid savings. However, the Congressional Budget Office says that any cost-cutting savings will only amount to \$2 Billion in ten years which is a drop in the bucket of a trillion dollar plan. It also means that the seniors who now depend on Medicare and Medicaid can kiss goodbye to the treatment on demand that they now enjoy.

People are now beginning to take stock of this massive spending plan under the guise of health reform. What will happen to my health plan? Pres. Obama tells us not to worry because we can keep it. It's probably true in the short run. But if the employer finds that it is cheaper to pay a percentage of the payroll into the public health plan maintained by the government, we will likely see the gradual demise of many private plans. Then we could end up in a government organized health plan with millions of members. Can you smell rationing of health services to limit costs and serve everybody?

There is a price that must be paid for universal health care. It is not just a trillion dollars in the next decade. It will also come at the expense of the quality health care that we now enjoy. A British member of the parliament, Daniel Hannan, warns Americans not to follow the way of the universal health care system that the British have. He points out as an example that the survival rate for breast and prostate cancer is four times higher in the U.S. where patients depend largely on private health care plans than in the United Kingdom where patients depend on a government health plan that covers everybody.

Pres. Obama says that the status quo is unacceptable. That does not mean that any alternative plan is palatable.