

Prior to the founding of the United States, political theorist and philosopher John Locke developed the theory that government derives its power and authority from the consent of the governed. Benjamin Franklin once wrote that "in free governments the rulers are the servants and the people their superiors and sovereigns." These are the principles that are fundamental to the American system and have helped shape the nation we know and love today.

Flash forward to the current setting and context. President Obama has made his intent clear on health care: Medical decisions will no longer be made by doctors and patients, but by the omnipotent prowess of the federal government. By proposing creation of a bureaucracy to ration care and determine the cost-effectiveness of care for individuals, he has violated at least one fundamental tenet of America's founding.

The House version of the bill creates fifty-three new departments, agencies and commissions, but one stands out: the 'National Institute of Comparative Effectiveness.' Though it may sound benign, this bureaucracy will be used to ration care.

A similar institution exists in Britain, called the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, given the curious acronym of N.I.C.E. Rulings on whether people live or die are made frequently in Britain and Canada, and if an individual has a pre-existing condition, is elderly, or for some reason deemed "unfit" for a lifesaving procedure, his chances of being granted that lifesaving procedure become uncertain. With health care rationing, lives will literally hang in the balance, subject to the whims of government.

In fact, it is documented that in countries where socialized medicine is in place, citizens suffer from drastically lower survival rates from ailments such as cancer and heart disease. On balance, survival rates range from around 30 percent to 50 percent below that of countries with private medicine.

This socialized-medicine package is a giant leap in a direction that changes the dynamic of government as a servant to the people, violating the widely acknowledged precept of democratic government, that it derives its power from those which it governs. Mr. Obama and other big-government advocates are now effectively forcing a shift in how the government views those it serves. The American government will begin to view its citizens as liabilities rather than assets.

By definition, a liability is an item to be categorized, managed, and ultimately dispensed with. If government views its citizens through the prism of structured assets and liabilities, a terrible precedent has been set.

I and my Republican colleagues view the American people as assets with the intelligence and power to decide for themselves what is best for them and their families. This is something we are committed to fight for, and we continue to do so.

Our grand republic was founded on the premise that the government derives its power from the "consent of the governed." If Mr. Obama and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have their way and this bill passes, perhaps we should change that to "consent of the governed, unless they represent too high of a liability."

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