

Many problems with health care reform effort

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The Modesto Bee
December 7, 2009*

I've been trying to figure out what the problem is with health care reform. Clearly, if the answer was easy, we wouldn't have World War III in Congress over this, and the American people wouldn't be totally confused. But I have come up with a few theories that might explain why it is so difficult to deal with.

There are the obvious problems. In Congress, it's politicking at its worst. Even though the Republicans have not presented a clear alternative to the current bill, they not only are criticizing the public option and the high cost of the health overhaul, but actually leading people to believe that they will lose their current insurance and telling senior citizens that Democrats want them to die sooner.

Democrats call it scare tactics. But Democrats have not done such a great job of explaining the bill or of countering Republican attacks, which leads me to the next obvious problem: People don't understand it.

That explains why the country is so divided on this issue. President Barack Obama and Democratic members of Congress have said over and over again that no one who currently has health insurance will lose it and that it will help cut costs, but people just don't believe it. Doubts could be dispelled if only people took the time to personally analyze the proposals. But who has the time to go over 2,000 pages, and if they did, would they understand it?

Then you have advocacy groups jamming the airwaves for and against it. A record \$170 million has already been spent by groups on all sides, according to the Campaign Media Analysis Group, with a new million-dollar campaign being launched just to persuade five key Senate Democrats to oppose it.

The very unfortunate side of all this is that the majority of Americans don't see the urgency of overhauling health care because they already have insurance. That in itself is regrettable, because it is the 30 million uninsured who end up going to the emergency room when they are in an advanced stage of illness and end up bringing the cost of treatment even higher, not to mention the human cost.

Most polls in the past six months have shown a lack of support among the American people for health care reform. The latest Rasmussen poll showed only 38 percent support, and a Gallup poll showed 35 percent support. But for the Latino community, surprisingly,

health care reform has become a top priority — more important than even immigration. Seventy-five percent of those questioned had insurance but still believed reform is urgent.

The results of the survey show that Latinos care about their community as a whole when it comes to health care reform. When asked about the reasons for their support, 30 percent pointed out the number of uninsured, and 22 percent said health care needs to be more affordable. Only 5 percent of Latino voters mentioned that they themselves or a family member was uninsured.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid says he wants to have a bill approved by the end of the year, even if it means working through Christmas Day. It would be great if in the spirit of the holiday season senate Republicans and the public understood that while money can't buy health, it can certainly buy health care.