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As divisive as the economic stimulus legislation has been, expect the battle to get even uglier as the Obama administration addresses health care reform later this year. The statistics are overwhelming: health insurance is more than double the cost of a decade ago, more people are uninsured than ever before, and if unchecked, health care will consume more than 35% of our GDP in the next ten years.

Both sides of the political aisle struggle for ways to contain this beast, but with very different approaches. President Obama has already signed a bill expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), bringing an additional 4 million children into the government-run program and giving us a glimpse of what the future holds. The Democratic plan is based on Jacob Hacker's Health Care for America plan while Republicans search for reform that maintains a free market system yet reigns in rising costs.

Hacker, a political scientist from Yale, proposes in his plan to expand a Medicare-like system to those without health care coverage by charging them an income-based premium. Employers would be required to provide insurance to their employees or, alternatively, make a mandatory 6% payroll-based contribution to the plan to cover the uninsured. The plan could, when combined with Medicare, negotiate better rates and lower prices, would allow enrollees open access to doctors, and be guaranteed.

Hacker claims his system would control costs by eliminating the uninsured, effectively negotiating lower costs and capitalizing on what he feels are Medicare's administrative efficiencies, but primarily on the backs of small businesses by requiring all employers to participate. Additional funding for the plan would come from liquor and tobacco taxes and anticipated savings from reduced enrollees in Medical Assistance and SCHIP programs at the state level.

Republican health care reform is far less comprehensive and focuses on tax breaks for individuals to purchase private insurance as well as efforts to impose reform and constraints on the existing insurance industry. These would mandate limits on premiums while expanding coverage and eligibility.

Although Health Care for America is a well thought out comprehensive plan, neither it nor the Republican plans deal with the most obvious problem. The vast majority of health care dollars are consumed treating four largely preventable diseases: type 2 diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, and obesity. If we as a nation simply push away from the table, put down our drinks, put out our cigarettes, and get off the couch, this huge political and societal problem virtually cures itself.

As is usually the case, we can look to government to solve our health care problems but telling us what to do, or we can look in the mirror for the best solution.