

# Stop Asking: "How will we pay for it?" When it Comes to Doing the Right Thing

I'm getting tired of hearing "How will we pay for it?" when it comes to proposed socialized medicine. This question is supposed to be a debate ender and is meant to draw people into dead-end arguments over budgets and taxes. But, in fact, it's not a dead end; we're just looking for answers to that question in the wrong place.

**People act like socialized medicine is some black hole where billions of dollars will disappear. Well, no. You're thinking of the Pentagon, where millions of dollars already do disappear.**

In socialized medicine, you will obviously employ people in it who will work and pay taxes. They will also spend that money, creating economic benefits. And, people served by it will have more money to spend because they're not going broke paying inflated insurance rates for medical care. The money does not simply disappear. It goes right back into the economy, rather than ending up in the pockets of defense contractors and Wall Street offshore bank accounts.

In a socialized medical system, we can pay the genuine costs and not the ballooning costs created by the need for profit margins. Keep in mind that most corporations need 20% growth per year to consider themselves successful. In health insurance, that means medical costs must go up, not down. Corporations are not out to find ways to offer the best quality for the least money. They're out to provide the the most money for their shareholders.

How can we justify this attitude when it comes to the health of human beings? If anyone says, "How will we pay for it?" they should be asked this question: Suppose your child or spouse was trapped in a



burning building. Firefighters arrive but you are asked, "How will you pay for this rescue?" The response to both questions should be the same.

Capitalism cheerleaders always tell us the market will fix it. But the market has not. Even the half-assed market-government hybrid of Obamacare has failed after the market itself could not deliver on the now nearly a hundred-year-old promise. The market has had plenty of time. Plenty of people have died waiting. Time's up. Now is the time for the market to get the hell out of the way.

Capitalism, again, delivers the least for the most money. That's the entire basis behind it now. You can see the way brand names once associated with high quality now offer shoddy junk but at the same price. It's called a "backdoor profit". That's where, if you cut the manufacturing costs and wages, you can make more money while keeping the product at the same price. Or, even raise the price and make twice the money. This is done in medical care now when it is provided by private insurance.

Nearly every Western nation has socialized medicine, but not the United States. The United States knows private medical insurance is inefficient, wasteful, and obscenely cavalier about human life and suffering. Still, it stubbornly clings to this illusion of "good private medical care" because its own ego is so heavily

invested in being "right" when most everyone of good sense can clearly see that it is wrong.

No one should say "How will we pay for it?" when it comes to doing what is right. We've thrown away trillions of dollars on weapons and war. Trillions spent on killing other human beings. And yet we only ask "How will we pay for it?" Then we hear:

**"Oh, all these people want free stuff!"**

The government gives the military "free stuff" like weapons!

In the Medieval Period, a knight had to supply his own weapons, armor, and horse out of his own pocket. The king didn't pay for it. The military today gets free stuff because they're not required to supply their own weapons. Oh, and they get free medical care too, pretty much for life under the VA. So let's have an end to this "free stuff" nonsense. Or, I say, let every member of the military buy their own rifle and every naval officer buy their own ship. Let us require the president pay every time he uses Air Force One, and pay monthly rent on the White House.

There is no scarcity of resources or available money. There is no lack of human resources to do it. There is a government capable of carrying out what needs to be done.

All that stands in the way is a superstitious cultural taboo created by capitalism. This is just as bad as a nation that has a cultural taboo that requires things like "honor killings" This is the same dynamic if you have a taboo that says you cannot create a socialized medical system to save lives. People are just as dead thanks to the taboo.

So let's have done with this backwards taboo created by capitalism, with its system of honor killings by medical neglect. Because that's what they are: Honor killings by proxy.

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## MOVING PILES OF MONEY AROUND AT AMAZON

The world's largest online retailer announced Tuesday that starting in November, all its workers would receive at least \$15 per hour — a key demand of labor advocates and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who had been trashing the company for its pay practices all year. But Amazon is making other changes to employees' compensation to help pay for the new wage floor in its fulfillment centers. Those changes include getting rid of what's known as the "variable compensation program," or VCP, which is based on a worker's attendance and his facility's production level, and eliminating a stock allotment program for certain employees.

The company awarded one share of restricted stock to employees after they'd worked at the company for a year, with the stock vesting a year later, meaning employees could then sell the stock for cash. One share of Amazon stock at the moment is worth nearly \$2,000. One worker said the VCP program had amounted to 8 percent of his pay each month.

Managers at an Amazon fulfillment center in Arizona probably thought they would be leading a celebration when they explained the company's new pay scheme to employees. Instead, some workers turned angry, convinced their take-home pay would go down. "You guys are taking VCP away!" shouted one worker during a Q&A session following a presentation about the raises. Losing that money, he said, would basically negate the dollar-per-hour raise he's expecting through the new program. (A 40-hour workweek translates to 2080 hours per year.) Taking the loss of restricted stock units into account, he suspects he will have less annual take-home pay than before. "I don't come out ahead," said the employee, who asked not to be named in order to speak freely. "It seems like the same pile of money, they're just moving it around."

Speaking into a microphone, a manager tried to assure the roomful of workers that everyone would be better off. "Please, please understand, you will all see a

benefit from this ... Please be patient," the manager urged as workers talked over him. An Amazon spokesperson said in an email that despite the cuts to the bonus and stock programs, all hourly workers would still come out ahead. "The significant increase in hourly cash wages more than compensates for the phase out of incentive pay and [restricted stock units]," the spokesperson wrote. "We can confirm that all hourly Operations and Customer Service employees will see an increase in their total compensation as a result of this announcement. "Workers already earning more than \$15 per hour will be receiving dollar raises so everyone sees some kind of hourly pay hike.



An employee in Florida said that as a new hire, he was glad to get a raise, but that some of his longer-tenured colleagues feared they would lose out. As in many workplaces, a lot of Amazon workers don't stick around long enough for their stock to vest, making it a benefit only on paper. In a high-turnover environment, workers might prefer cash wages to stock, depending on the latter's value.

Amazon's announcement of its new wage floor followed weeks of harsh criticism from Sanders, who said it was a disgrace that Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos — the world's richest man, according to Forbes — paid his workers so little that some qualified for government programs like Medicaid and food stamps. Sanders even introduced a bill called The Stop BEZOS Act. The minimum wage announcement brought Amazon and Bezos glowing news coverage and even the plaudits from Sanders himself.

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