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## CAMP: Health care by Uncle Sam

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### OP-ED:

Nov. 20, 1993. That is when "HillaryCare" was introduced in the House of Representatives.

Today, the Democrats, including presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama, are still pushing for a government takeover of health care. Call it HillaryCare 2.0. Call it Medicare for All. Call it whatever you want, but it still puts the federal government at the center of your health care.

The rhetoric has improved, but the policy has not. It still requires a massive increase in taxes that we cannot afford. It rations care, limits choices and limits procedures just as it has in Western Europe and in Canada. No wonder we said "no" 15 years ago.

Even our northern neighbors are recognizing this mistake. The founder of the Canadian system, Claude Castonguay, was recently quoted saying: "We thought we could resolve the system's problems by rationing services or injecting massive amounts of new money into it." Now, however, he says they are "proposing to give a greater role to the private sector so that people can exercise freedom of choice."

Republicans are offering a better alternative. Instead of looking abroad for healthcare solutions, we are promoting an American solution to drive down costs and give everyone access to quality, affordable health care.

We do that by 1) leveling the playing field so every American gets a tax benefit to purchase health care, just like businesses do; 2) eliminating legal and regulatory barriers that drive up costs; 3) utilizing technology to save lives and money; and, 4) focusing on prevention and wellness, not just treating you once you are already sick.

How does it work? First, we will lower costs and let you keep your insurance if you change or lose your job by using the power of the tax code. The tax code created employer-provided health care and it is time for the tax code to create personal, individual health care.

Nearly 85 percent of Americans who have health insurance get it through

their employer. That's because since World War II we have provided companies with a tax incentive to do so.

While we must protect employer-provided health care, the generosity of the American taxpayers should not go to businesses alone. Tax incentives to purchase and save for health insurance should apply to individuals, small businesses and large corporations alike.

Second, we will further reduce costs by letting you shop around. No more unnecessary and redundant regulatory and legal barriers that limit your options and limit the services offered by local doctors and hospitals.

If you can go on the Internet and shop for the best deal on a washer and dryer, a car, a home, a mortgage or life insurance, then you should be able to do the same for health insurance.

Someone's health in Michigan is not so different from someone in Ohio. But in America you can't buy health insurance from a provider in a neighboring state, let alone across the country. This is wrong and we should eliminate these artificial barriers.

And, you should know what you are paying for. By creating greater transparency you will be able to go online to find reviews for your doctor and your hospital the same way you would for any other product. The technology is there, the data is there, and we should be able to access it. No more hiding the fact that you or your insurance are being billed \$15 for a pill that only costs 35 cents!

Third, we must realize the revolution in technology and the Internet aren't just for Silicon Valley and manufacturers. Utilized by hospitals and patients alike these tools - like e-records, e-prescribing and quality information - will also save lives and money.

There are nearly 100,000 deaths caused every year by preventable medical errors. Health information technology can literally save tens of thousands of Americans every year. And, by eliminating duplicative procedures and clerical mistakes we will save a minimum of \$81 billion annually, enough to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for a family by 25 percent.

Fourth, we apply the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin's adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure - that simple fact is truer in health care than anywhere else. When we start paying for cholesterol medication instead of heart attacks, we will not only save lives, we will save money. Wellness must be a focal point of our health-care system.

Armed with the same tax benefits larger employers use to provide health-

care coverage, along with regulatory reforms, a focus on prevention and wellness, and the use of technology, we will unleash the power of individuals and small businesses to purchase quality health care.

There is an alternative to government owned and operated health care, and Republicans are providing it.

*Rep. Dave Camp, Michigan Republican, is the senior Republican on the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee on health care reform.*