

Health: Inherent to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness



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We urgently need an American bipartisan consensus to achieve and implement a quality and sustainable health care system for all Americans on a par with health care systems of other high-income economies...!

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are enshrined in the *American Declaration of Independence* and in the American *think big, can do spirit*. Health is *sine qua non* for accomplishing all of these.

Health is essential for longevity and quality of life. Individuals' and populations' health are invaluable assets for development and for sustaining robust economies and democracies. Health is also essential to a nation's security and prosperity.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), enacted during the Obama administration, an imperfect piece of legislation, in need of revision and fine tuning, contested unsuccessfully more than sixty times by its opponents, has nevertheless made healthcare accessible to millions of Americans who prior to it did not have such access to care.

The American Health Care Act (AHCA), introduced by the Trump

administration recently, and withdrawn on March 24, 2017, for insufficient votes to pass it, would have reversed the recent trend of enhanced access to care for many Americans. The Congressional Budget Office, projected that had the Bill been enacted, over the next ten years 24 million Americans would have lost access to care.

The United States annual health care expenditures are over \$3 trillions per year, or about \$10,000.00 per person, per year and close to 20% of the national budget. No other high-income economy has similar expenditures. Practically all other high-income economies provide health care access to all their citizens for lesser budget allocations and their health systems' performance, in aggregate, is superior to the American one on all indices, inclusive of access, quality, and sustainability.

After the recent bruising defeat of Trump administration's AHCA, it is unlikely that a bipartisan coalition will surface immediately, in its aftermath, to make the necessary and long overdue corrections and updates of the Affordable Care Act. It is likely that this unresolved, high priority health care issue will be one of the debate platforms of the upcoming 2018 US Congressional election.

Health is and remains a *sine qua non* component of the American credo of *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*.

In the 2018 Congressional elections, we hope the candidates will *put America first*; rekindle the American tradition of *think big, can do spirit*; apply that innovative, winning spirit to authentic health care reform; emulate the Ronald Reagan & Tip O'Neill bipartisan example; accept that American exceptionalism may also learn from other health systems how to best achieve *total health care for all* across the life cycle; and work together, in bipartisan fashion, for our country and all our people to update and enhance the ACA or present an enhanced, bipartisan alternative if necessary.

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