



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 4, 2011

Reality Check: ObamaCare & Death Panels

When Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin first used the term “death panels” to reference a provision of Obama’s signature healthcare law, she was mercilessly mocked. She even appeared in MAD Magazine’s Mad 20, which features the top 20 “dumbest” people of 2009, for her mention of what MAD called “imaginary death panels.”

But as it turns out, there are indeed death panels under ObamaCare — but they don’t stop at President Obama’s Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; they come from Republican administrations in a number of states as well.



When Palin first made the charge regarding death panels on her Facebook page on August 7, 2009, she wrote:

And who will suffer the most when they ration care? The sick, the elderly, and the disabled, of course. The America I know and love is not one in which my parents or my baby with Down Syndrome will have to stand in front of Obama’s ‘death panel’ so his bureaucrats can decide, based on a subjective judgment of their ‘level of productivity in society,’ whether they are worthy of health care. Such a system is downright evil.

Fortunately, her scathing criticism forced Democrats to drop the “death panel” provisions from the healthcare package.

However, Democrats found a way to achieve their goal by way of [regulation](#) instead, introduced by Obama Medicare chief Dr. Donald Berwick. A new Medicare regulation implemented on January 1, 2011 pays doctors to advise patients on options for end-of-life care, which includes advanced directives to forego aggressive life-sustaining treatment.

In addition to the end-of-life Medicare rule, state governments are implementing “death panels” of sorts to help handle their budget woes.

The [Washington Post](#) reports:

In Arizona, the government headed by Gov. Jan Brewer summarily stopped approving Medicaid payments for many organ transplants in October; one man had a liver virtually snatched away while he waited to go into the operating room. He couldn’t get it unless he came up with \$200,000 to pay for the procedure.

In Indiana, the state Medicaid program denied a lifesaving operation last year to a 6-month-old boy who lacked a thymus gland, which generates cells that the body uses to fight infection. The Indiana Family Social Services Administration said the procedure was ‘experimental’ — even though it had been successful in 43 of the 60 cases in which it had been applied. The state twice denied the family’s appeals, but fortunately the publicity caused by this case prodded two health



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care companies to pay for the \$500,000 operation.

According to the *Post*, Arizona and Indiana are just the beginning. As stimulus money begins to run out and state legislators find their budgets in dire straits, they will need to make difficult cuts, more than likely to programs such as Medicaid.

Cuts to Medicaid come in a variety of forms, ranging from cutting payments to providers, reducing benefits, or reducing the number of participants. Texas Governor Rick Perry is even considering eliminating the entire program from his state.

However, as noted by the *Washington Post*, each reform measure provokes another drawback:

 Cutting benefits or cutting programs.... will lead to bureaucrats making life-and-death decisions based on money alone, and it will include perversely stupid budgetary decisions. As for the Texas option, it would require giving up a huge slice of federal dollars that subsidize Medicaid, with no source of replacement.

The American healthcare system continues to find itself on an expedited path toward a politicized system, replacing the once effective one based on medical science and private judgment.

Some hope remains, however: House Republicans have scheduled a vote to repeal ObamaCare on [January 12](#), just one week into the 112th Congress.

According to number two House Republican Eric Cantor of Virginia,

 Obamacare is a job killer for businesses small and large...Further, Obamacare failed to lower costs as the president promised that it would and does not allow people to keep the care they currently have if they like it. That is why the House will repeal it next week.

Will the Republicans keep their campaign promises? Will the Democrats be more receptive to the will of the American people? Only time will tell.

One thing is certain. If the repeal bill does pass the House, it is expected to face fierce opposition in the Senate.

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