

The debate on health care reform has been filled with partisan attacks on everything from imaginary “death panels” and “socialism” to criticism of parliamentary procedures. But there’s one topic critics love to avoid: what’s actually in the bill.

To begin with, the bill prevents insurance companies from increasing premiums and denying care to sick Americans, denying coverage to Americans with pre-existing conditions, and declaring customers too sick for the coverage they’ve paid for. No longer will Americans go bankrupt simply because they had the bad fortune to get sick.

Reform also means that Americans can keep their coverage if they change or lose a job or go into business for themselves. To make coverage affordable and accessible, it creates a marketplace where private companies compete for your business. With individuals and small businesses pooling together, they’ll have access to the low rates once only available to large corporations. Small businesses will also see \$40 billion in tax credits to help them cover their workers.

For seniors, Medicare will be more effective and secure. Access to Medicare doctors will be protected, physicians will have incentives to cooperate on higher-quality care, and the “donut hole” that makes prescription drugs unaffordable will be closed. Reform also helps keep Medicare solvent for the next generation.

Finally, reform takes important steps to control the rising costs that have made American health care the most expensive in the world, including changing the tax treatment of some health plans, helping doctors coordinate for more efficient care, making it easier for hospitals to store information electronically, and fighting waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicare.

Far from a “government takeover,” this is a consumer takeover of health care—one that takes decisions out of the hands of insurance companies and puts them in your hands.

When President Obama signs reform into law, Americans will feel immediate effects: small business tax credits will make employee coverage more affordable; parents will be able to keep their children on their health plans until they reach 26; seniors will receive \$250 to help pay for prescriptions; and denial of coverage because of pre-existing conditions or lifetime caps on benefits will end for good.

In the long term, we can expect the effects to fall into four categories: less debt, lower health care costs, better quality, and more jobs.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) found that reform is fully paid-for and will

reduce our deficit by \$138 billion over the first decade and more than \$1 trillion over the second decade. That makes it the biggest deficit-buster since President Clinton's budget in the 1990s, which helped create historic economic growth.

In addition, by removing a tremendous burden from our small businesses, health reform will be a significant job-creator. According to a USC/Harvard study, reform will help our businesses create up to 4 million jobs this decade.

Reform is a major step forward for America's health, fairness, and prosperity.