



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on December 1, 2011

Barney Frank Cosponsors Bill to Repeal Medicare Rationing Board

Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), for example, [announced](#) on Monday that he would be retiring at the end of his term. The next day, reports the [Daily Caller](#), he signed on as a cosponsor of Rep. Phil Roe's (R-Tenn.) bill to repeal ObamaCare's Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB), a bureaucracy Roe called "the real death panel" in the healthcare law in an interview with the conservative news site in March. Frank thus became the 12th — and by far the most prominent — Democrat, and the 212th congressman overall, to cosponsor Roe's bill.



IPAB is a 15-member panel appointed by the President to keep Medicare costs under control, thereby keeping the deficit in check. "The board would cap the total amount of money Medicare recipients could receive for care," the [Daily Caller](#) explains. Should a beneficiary require care whose cost exceeds the amount set by IPAB, he would simply be out of luck.

"Basically, there's a certain amount of money that's allocated for Medicare spending each year," Roe told the [Daily Caller](#). "Once you hit that amount that's been appropriated, this board, this bureaucratically appointed board, can then decide, not based on quality or need, but based on strictly cost."

Moreover, wrote *National Review's* Andrew Stiles in a [June 13 article](#):

Under the law, there are only a few ways for the board's cost-control recommendations to be amended. Congress can pass alternative measures that reduce Medicare spending by at least as much as the IPAB proposal; or, three-fifths of the Senate can vote to override the IPAB proposal entirely. If Congress fails to pass its own version by a certain deadline and the Senate doesn't waive the requirement with a three-fifths vote, the board's recommendations automatically become law.

IPAB is "a central component of [President Barack Obama's] 'framework' to reduce the deficit," Stiles observed. There is no question that Medicare costs are one of the main drivers of exploding federal spending. The only question is what to do about them. Constitutionlists recognize that the only real long-term fix is to repeal the whole Medicare monstrosity and to allow the market, which provides so many other services in abundance and at low cost, to see to senior citizens' health needs, with charities (and possibly state and local governments) picking up the tab for hardship cases. Republicans in Congress, led by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), have proposed giving seniors subsidies to buy health insurance, which might be preferable to doing nothing. Meanwhile, Stiles stated in a [November 29 piece](#), "Obama's top-down approach involves a board of unelected bureaucrats employing cold cost-benefit analysis to make far-reaching decisions about what procedures will be covered under Medicare and at what cost; in other words, health-care rationing." Surely this is the least



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humane of the available options.

Fortunately, Frank, who strongly supported and voted for ObamaCare, is adding some political heft to an already long list of those on both the left and the right who oppose IPAB. Some want IPAB repealed because it will inevitably ration care; others decry its lack of accountability. Either way, “such bipartisan opposition to IPAB certainly poses another challenge to the Obama administration in its effort to defend an increasingly unpopular health-care law,” remarked Stiles, adding that Roe expects his bill to “see action sometime next year.” With so many cosponsors, it seems likely the bill will pass the Republican-dominated House; how it will fare in the Democrat-controlled Senate is another matter altogether.

Nevertheless, Bobby Schindler, co-executive director of the Terri Schiavo Life and Hope Network, finds reason for optimism in recent events:

First Donald Berwick, who fawned over how wonderful rationing is, resigned from his post as head of Medicare and Medicaid, and now Barney Frank has determined that IPAB is an awful idea. If a liberal lion like Barney Frank can't even stomach IPAB, why should the American people? We hope that Obamacare continues to unravel and is ultimately either struck down as unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court or is fully repealed by the U.S. Congress. No one, especially the government, has the right to decide who gets to live and die.

Photo of Rep. Barney Frank: AP Images



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