



Harry & Louise & Uncle Sam

They're back, and they've changed their tune. Harry and Louise, the fictional couple who starred in television commercials about healthcare reform about 15 years ago, have gone from being skeptical to enthusiastic.

A July 16 *New York Times* [article](#) mentions how the couple's appearance in a series of commercials sponsored by the health insurance industry in 1993 and 1994 played a part in scuttling reform efforts during Bill Clinton's presidency. Now, during the administration of another Democratic president, Barack Obama, they have switched to promoting reform.



The current commercial features Harry and Louise talking about how many people are struggling with the high cost of insurance and how they need to have coverage despite preexisting conditions or to keep coverage through job change or loss. Louise concludes: "A little more cooperation, a little less politics, and we can get the job done this time." View the commercial immediately below.

Concern for their fellow Americans is an admirable trait evidenced by Harry and Louise. Unfortunately, the line about "a little less politics" — as if the only thing standing in the way of reform is a minority of Republicans who are determined to oppose reform just because it is being proposed by a Democrat — does a disservice to the very Americans Harry and Louise claim to care about.

America is laboring under a government-imposed managed-care system, not a free-market approach. There are legitimate concerns that government interference got us to where we are today and more government intervention would only make things worse. It is not purely ideological politics that stand in the way of Uncle Sam wrapping his hands more tightly around the healthcare system. Cold, hard facts from the Congressional Budget Office, the race to insolvency between Medicare and Social Security, and the negative experiences of other nations with socialized medicine are all signaling a bright red light against reform that increases government control.

The couple seems to be forgetting about the healthy skepticism of old Uncle Sam that they had back in the '90s. Back then they realized that if insurance is forced to cover everyone at the same rate regardless of preexisting conditions or risk factors, rates will skyrocket for everyone equally, causing the healthy to pay more than their fair share while those who smoke or drink or engage in other risky behavior get off cheap. The previous Harry-and-Louise commercial called this "flat community rating," but the old arguments are still valid today. See for yourself in the second half of the video below.

Harry and Louise do appear to have a genuine concern about reform in both the old and new commercials. It is unfortunate that they don't seem to understand that their Uncle Sam got us to where we are and getting him more involved only makes things worse.

In the old commercial, the couple talked about government limiting their choices. They really ought to



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on July 21, 2009

have said the same thing in the current spot because Obama wants government to offer a one-size-fits-all public option while also imposing strict requirements on any private insurance carrier that desires to participate in a national insurance exchange. Obama even said on the Prescription for America TV special that people receiving employer-based insurance would not be allowed to drop out and go on the supposedly less-expensive public plan. That is a prime example of government limiting choice.

Harry and Louise need to think long and hard about why they are so willing to trust their strange old Uncle Sam, and they need to remember their own words about the choices offered by government bureaucrats: "Having choices we don't like is no choice at all. They choose; we lose."



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