



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on December 27, 2018

Lurching Further Leftward, Democrats to Push Single-payer Healthcare

Although single-payer healthcare is unlikely to be enacted in the next few years given Republican control of the White House and Senate, Democrats, egged on by the hard Left, are hoping to push public opinion — and, if possible, the law — in that direction, [Bloomberg](#) reports.



Sahil Kapur writes:

Their aim for now is to shift the health care debate. By making single-payer health care — a model under which all Americans would get their insurance from a single government plan — the progressive position, advocates argue that gives Democrats representing conservative areas of the country political cover to support more modest proposals to expand the government’s role in health insurance.

“Everybody understands we’re not going to get Medicare for All enacted in January. But it’s a marker about where we want to land, which is to say we want everybody to have health care,” Democratic Senator Brian Schatz of Hawaii said in an interview. “This is about moving the so-called Overton window.”

The Overton window — named for its originator, Joseph Overton, former senior vice president of the free-market Mackinac Center for Public Policy — describes the range of ideas that are acceptable to the public. As the window moves over time, ideas once considered unthinkable become politically possible.

Over the past century, progressives have steadily pushed the Overton window to the left on a range of issues, including healthcare, slowly but surely transforming the healthcare system from one based on free markets to one based on government subsidies and control. (Not coincidentally, during that same time period, healthcare has become slow, bureaucratic, and outrageously expensive.) Many observers feared that ObamaCare, the latest manifestation of this shift in public opinion, was just another step down the road to single-payer healthcare, and their fears appear to have been well-founded.

Already the public has become more amenable to single-payer, particularly if it is disguised as “Medicare for All,” as Senator Bernie Sanders’ (I-Vt.) [proposed legislation](#) calls it. A March Kaiser Family Foundation [poll](#) found that 59 percent of Americans favor “Medicare for All,” though that number drops to 53 percent when the plan is called “single-payer.” Even higher numbers support “Medicaid buy-in” and optional “Medicare for All” proposals.

The popularity of socialized medicine is reflected in the fact that Sanders’ bill — despite the fact that it



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has been estimated to cost some [\\$33 trillion](#) over its first decade — “is backed by numerous Democratic senators considering 2020 presidential bids, including New Jersey’s Cory Booker, New York’s Kirsten Gillibrand, California’s Kamala Harris, and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts,” pens Kapur. Newly elected progressive firebrands such as New York’s Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Minnesota’s Ilhan Omar are huge supporters of “Medicare for All,” and former President Barack Obama has also endorsed the idea.

“In the debate about what it means to be a Democrat, the progressive vision has won out,” Sean McElwee of the left-wing group Data for Progress told Kapur. Conservative and centrist Democrats, he averred, “are like the dinosaurs and the meteor’s already coming.”

Still, with Republicans able to block most of their proposals, Democrats are going to have to find other ways of achieving their objectives. The plan is to offer up a variety of bills that would move policy further down the road to single-payer. Schatz, for instance, has introduced a bill to let anyone buy into Medicaid, while other Democrats prefer various Medicare expansions. Such bills are unlikely to become law unless Democrats can capture both Congress and the presidency in 2020, but they serve to keep healthcare alive as an issue and to nudge public opinion toward single-payer.

Representative Pramila Jayapal of Washington, who is set to co-chair the Progressive Caucus, told Kapur healthcare is likely to be “the top issue of the 2020 presidential campaign.” In the meantime, Jayapal “said that she’d favor modest expansions of Medicare or Medicaid eligibility as a step toward Medicare for All,” notes Kapur.

Clearly, the Left will not give up until it imposes a single-payer, British-style healthcare system on the United States, notwithstanding the fact that such a system is both unconstitutional and certain to lead to even higher costs, [long waiting lists](#), [care rationing](#), and [unnecessary deaths](#). Americans who value their liberty and lives had better remain vigilant.



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