



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 15, 2011

Rand Paul: Right to Healthcare Is “Slavery”

[According to the Burlington Free Press](#), the chairman of the subcommittee, Sen. Bernard Sanders (I-Vt.), “noted that people in Vermont believe health care is a right.” Paul, the ranking Republican on the subcommittee, took the opportunity to set Green Mountain State residents straight:

With regard to the idea of whether or not you have a right to healthcare, you have to realize what that implies. It’s not an abstraction. I’m a physician, and that means you have a right to come to my house and conscript me. It means you believe in slavery. It means that you are going to enslave not only me but the janitor at my hospital, the person who cleans my office, the assistants who work in my office, the nurses.



“Once you imply a belief in a right to someone’s services,” [Paul maintained](#), “you’re basically saying that you believe in slavery.” Indeed, one dictionary definition of a slave is “a person who is forced to work for another against his will,” which comports nicely with Paul’s understanding of the implications of a “right” to healthcare.

Sanders countered Paul’s argument with an effective bit of showmanship, asking one of the witnesses, “Do you, as an employee of a federally qualified health center, consider yourself as a slave?” — a remark that the *Free Press* notes got a hearty laugh from the audience.

The witness replied, “I love my job. I chose to work there. I do not consider myself a slave. Thank you.”

Of course, one can be a slave to the state without even realizing it, as journalist Milton Mayer discovered in researching his book *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans, 1933-45*.

At the same time, Paul’s comments, coming from the perspective of an ophthalmologist, only touched on one aspect of the slavery inherent in the alleged right to healthcare. Healthcare providers generally do get paid under universal healthcare systems, a fact that made Paul’s attack on the “right” to healthcare easy to parry. However, the money to pay them has to come from somewhere. In a free market, it comes from the voluntary interactions of buyers and sellers. Under a government-mandated “right” to healthcare, on the other hand, it is taken by force from taxpayers. Some persons, therefore, are being forced to work for others in order to earn the money to pay for their healthcare — again, the very definition of slavery.

As Paul put it, “That’s ultimately what the right to free healthcare would be. If you believe in a right to healthcare, you’re believing in basically the use of force to conscript someone to do your bidding.” Whether the person being conscripted is the actual healthcare provider or, say, a construction worker,



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the fruits of whose labor are being confiscated to pay the provider for someone else's care, is entirely beside the point.

Knowing that his remarks could appear to be evidence of a callous disregard for the poor who are unable to afford healthcare, Paul went on to explain that he did treat "100 percent" of the patients who came to his hospital's emergency room, not just because it was hospital policy but also because of his Christian faith and his belief in the Hippocratic Oath. His point, however, was that he did so voluntarily, whereas under universal healthcare he could be made to do so under "an implied threat of force."

Following Paul's two-minute discourse on the so-called right to healthcare, Sanders commented, "I think it's fair to say that Sen. Paul and I have slight philosophical differences."

Indeed they do. Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, believes that some people have the right to the labor of others and that the Constitution that he has sworn to uphold permits the federal government to enslave some for the benefit of others under the guise of charity. Paul, by contrast, believes that people ought to be free to keep the fruits of their own labor, a matter on which "our founding documents were very clear," he said. "You have a right to pursue happiness, but there's no guarantee of physical comfort. There's no guarantee of concrete items."

Constitutionalists should have no trouble deciding whether to side with the socialist's scheme of slavery or the ophthalmologist's vision of liberty.

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul: AP Images



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