

Claims of cost savings are utterly false
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Re: "Savings estimate wins votes," March 19 news story.

Reading many of the media reports from the past few days about the "new" compromise health care bill Democrats will move through Congress this weekend, you would think the final bill is a magic deficit reduction potion.

Democrats are touting claims that this so-called new final package will reduce the deficit by more than \$1 trillion over the next two decades. These claims are utterly false, and it doesn't take a budget expert or economist to see that.

Let me explain. The evidence lies in the assumptions that the official scorekeepers of legislation, the Congressional Budget Office, used in arriving at their conclusion that the bill would save money.

Unlike the fiscal notes that are done by the Legislative Council experts in the Colorado General Assembly, the number-crunchers in Congress are not allowed to challenge key assumptions in proposed legislation.

They must accept the economic premises given to them by those writing the legislation. In this case, the Democrats. So when Speaker Nancy Pelosi asserts she can pay for much of the bill

by stripping hundreds of billion from waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicare, the CBO is not allowed to challenge that assumption.

So what happens to that cost estimate when the program is started and the savings in Medicare don't materialize?

Another assumption is the length of the cost analysis itself. The tax increases in the bill (about a half trillion) and the Medicare cuts (transfers to fund the new program) will start immediately, but the benefits don't begin to kick in until after 2013.

This is done so Democrats can say that the first 10 years the program will produce a cost savings. Based on when the benefits will begin, the cost of the bill is essentially calculated by comparing 10 years of new taxes and Medicare cuts with only six years of spending under the new program.

The CBO is required to accept those assumptions too, rather than produce an analysis of what it will cost taxpayers in the second 10 years, and every decade thereafter.

Starting to sound like a shell game? It is. It's actually a nifty trick to misrepresent the true cost of this government takeover of more than one-sixth of the American economy.

That cost, the real cost, is \$2.3 trillion.

This nation is mired in debt and the federal government is in a sickly culture of deficit spending. The massive new entitlements in this bill are just more of the same irresponsible and reckless deficit spending. The rhetoric of deficit reduction simply fails to meet reality - and you don't have to be a budget expert to figure that out.

U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman represents Colorado's 6th Congressional District.

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