HEALTH CARE: CANADA VS. US OBAMACARE

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Dear America:

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In the early 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson enrolled 20 million elderly Americans into medicare in six months. There were no websites. They did it with index cards.

Here are 22 ways the Canadian health-care system is better than Obamacare.

Love, Canada

No. 22: In Canada, everyone is covered automatically at birth — everybody in, nobody out.

In the United States, under Obamacare, 31 million Americans will still be uninsured by 2023 and millions more will remain underinsured.

No. 21: In Canada, the health system is designed to put people, not profits, first.

In the United States, Obamacare will do little to curb insurance industry profits and will actually enhance insurance industry profits.

No. 20: In Canada, coverage is not tied to a job or dependent on your income — rich and poor are in the same system, the best guarantee of quality.

In the United States, under Obamacare, much still depends on your job or income. Lose your job or

lose your income and you might lose your existing health insurance or have to settle for lesser coverage.

No. 19: In Canada, health-care coverage stays with you for your entire life.

In the United States, under Obamacare, for tens of millions of Americans, health-care coverage stays with you for as long as you can afford your share.

No. 18: In Canada, you can freely choose your doctors and hospitals and keep them. There are no lists of "in-network" vendors and no extra hidden charges for going "out of network."

In the United States, under Obamacare, the in-network list of places where you can get treated is shrinking — thus restricting freedom of choice — and if you want to go out of network, you pay for it.

No. 17: In Canada, the health-care system is funded by income, sales and corporate taxes that, combined, are much lower than what Americans pay in premiums.

In the United States, under Obamacare, for thousands of Americans, it's pay or die — if you can't pay, you die. That's why many thousands will still die every year under Obamacare from lack of health insurance to get diagnosed and treated in time.

No. 16: In Canada, there are no complex hospital or doctor bills. In fact, usually you don't even see a bill.

In the United States, under Obamacare, hospital and doctor bills will still be terribly complex, making it impossible to discover the many costly overcharges.

No. 15: In Canada, costs are controlled. Canada pays 10 per cent of its GDP for its health-care system, covering everyone.

In the United States, under Obamacare, costs continue to skyrocket. The U.S. pays 18 per cent of its GDP and still doesn't cover tens of millions of people.

No. 14: In Canada, it is unheard of for anyone to go bankrupt due to health-care costs.

In the United States, under Obamacare, health-care-driven bankruptcy will continue to plague Americans.

No. 13: In Canada, if you lose your job, you don't lose your health insurance.

In the United States, you will often hear people say, "I hate my job, but I can't leave it because I'll lose my health insurance." Or people will be forced to get a job they hate just for the health insurance.

No. 12: In Canada, simplicity leads to major savings in administrative costs and overhead.

In the United States, under Obamacare, complexity will lead to ratcheting up administrative costs

and overhead.

No. 11: In Canada, when you go to a doctor or hospital the first thing they ask you is: "What's wrong?"

In the United States, the first thing they ask you is: "What kind of insurance do you have?"

No. 10: In Canada, the government negotiates drug prices so they are more affordable.

In the United States, under Obamacare, Congress made it specifically illegal for the government to negotiate drug prices for volume purchases, so they remain unaffordable.

No. 9: In Canada, government health-care funds are not profitably diverted to the top 1 per cent.

In the United States, under Obamacare, health-care funds will continue to flow to the top. In 2012, CEOs at six of the largest insurance companies in the U.S. received a total of $83.3 million in pay, plus benefits.

No. 8: In Canada, there are no necessary co-pays or deductibles.

In the United States, under Obamacare, the deductibles and co-pays will continue to be unaffordable for many millions of Americans.

No. 7: In Canada, the health-care system contributes to social solidarity and national pride.

In the United States, Obamacare is divisive, with rich and poor in different systems and tens of millions left out or with sorely limited benefits.

No. 6: In Canada, delays in health care are not due to the cost of insurance.

In the United States, under Obamacare, patients without health insurance or who are underinsured will continue to delay or forgo care and put their lives at risk.

No. 5: In Canada, nobody dies due to lack of health insurance.
In the United States, under Obamacare, many thousands will continue to die every year due to lack of health insurance.

No. 4: In Canada, an increasing majority supports their health-care system, which costs half as much per person as in the United States.

In the United States, a majority — many for different reasons — oppose Obamacare.

No. 3: In Canada, the tax payments to fund the health-care system are progressive — the lowest 20 per cent pays 6 per cent of income into the system while the highest 20 per cent pays 8 per cent.

In the United States, under Obamacare, the poor pay a larger share of their income for health care than the affluent.

No. 2: In Canada, the administration of the system is simple. You get a health card when you are

born. And you swipe it when you go to a doctor or hospital. End of story.

In the United States, Obamacare's 2,500 pages plus regulations (the Canadian medicare bill was 13 pages) is so complex that then-speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said before passage: "We have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it."

No. 1: In Canada, the majority of citizens love their health-care system.

In the United States, the majority of citizens, physicians and nurses prefer the Canadian-type system — single-payer, free choice of doctor and hospital, everybody in, nobody out.

Ralph Nader is a Washington-based political activist and consumer advocate. For more information see Single Payer Action.