



Chandler avoids town halls, tough questions

By Jim Waters

Kentuckians already were concerned about Washington's plan to absorb 15 percent of the economy and take away individuals' health care decisions.

But when U.S. Rep. Ben Chandler, D-Ky., said he wouldn't have a town hall meeting to directly answer questions about the "reform," many in his district hit the roof.

Chandler told [WKYT-TV](#) he chose not to hold a town hall because of the "incivility" of the debate. But his constituents are not fooled.

They know the real reason Chandler wants to avoid a town hall. It's not easy to face small-business owners whose taxes under President Barack Obama's health care proposal could, as Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., indicated in a floor speech, rise as much as 45 percent.

Chandler knows Obama's comment that "If you can afford it, either give your employees health insurance or pay into the pot" may go over well on the East Coast but not in Lexington.

It's tough for Chandler to explain how constituents satisfied with their health care plans can keep them – especially when a government-run plan doesn't have to make a profit and taxes subsidize it when the kitty gets low.

What happens when the private health-insurance providers can't compete with the public plan? Inquiring town-hall attendees would want to know, Mr. Chandler.

I'm not saying private insurers are angels. History shows – and heaven knows – they are not. But that doesn't justify government intervention that worsens rather than improves the system.

When government's solution makes the problem worse, guess who pays?

Those who "can afford" to pay, Obama says. Hmmmm. I wonder: Who's going to decide who can "afford" to pay?

It might be tough for Chandler to explain the rush to create such a massive government program.

Many of the mandates suggested lack adequate analysis of their economic impact. Most analysis does not go beyond 2019, only a decade and not long when considering the long-term economic impact that this policy would have.

What's the rush, congressman? Inquiring potential town-hall attendee minds want to know.

And who can predict how many more mandates will be added before Congress gets done with its version of health care “reform?”

Make no mistake, the health care proposals on the table now would launch another assault on Kentucky’s fragile economy.

John Garen, chairman of the Department of Economics and Gatton Endowed Professor of Economics at the University of Kentucky, said the proposals most popular among supporters of a government-run health care system call for [a large expansion of Medicaid](#), which gets a great deal of its money from state taxes.

“This is a (Medicaid) program whose expenditures are already out of control – increasing in Kentucky at an average annual rate of about 9 percent over the 2003-2008 period,” Garen said.

In other words, we’ve already got too many people on the government dole. Do we want policies that encourage even more dependency?

Garen also said that proposals call for the government plan to “establish reimbursement rates for physicians and services near Medicare rates.”

Considering that Kentucky’s Medicare reimbursement rates rank among the lowest, is it any wonder that many health care providers remain very suspicious of Washington’s proposals?

Many of these providers don’t want to accept additional Medicare patients *now*. Forcing them to take on additional patients under a new plan that could have similar very low reimbursement rates holds the potential for great “incivility.”

And Chandler knows that.

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