

Backroom deals on Medicaid just wrong

Transparency is not a quality that most politicians naturally seek.

Whereas backroom deals have always been a mainstay of our legislative process, the degree to which this kind of seditious decision-making can be kept from the general public is being dramatically diminished by the proliferation of technology.

In today's media-driven world, elected officials can be held accountable in ways that were previously unimaginable.

At the same time, many of our representatives seem to be increasingly brazen with their political maneuvering. In the past, politicians would at least attempt to create the illusion that they were acting for the common good.

Contemporary legislators, by comparison, seem much less concerned about this perception as they pursue their respective agendas.

Cutting deals that favor particular regions of the country in order to secure support for legislation that affects everyone is patently unfair. I care about Kentucky and want my elected officials to advocate for what is in our best interest. But it should always be kept in mind that we are Americans first and Kentuckians second.

By the same standard, the concession that Sen. Ben Nelson secured for Nebraska should be thoroughly and solidly denounced. Medicaid was specifically designed to be funded as a collaborative undertaking between the federal government and the individual states. Getting Congress to fully fund its expansion in one state — in a blatant exchange for support for more comprehensive legislation that affects the rest of the country — is simply not right.

Who will end up shouldering the cost of Nebraska's Medicaid program if this bill becomes law? Everyone except those who should bear primary responsibility: the residents of Nebraska. Again, this is just plain wrong and should not be allowed.

Again, I applaud the new transparency. It is intrinsically good for the democratic process.

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