

The devil is in the details on health care

I have been criticized by some for simply suggesting that whatever plan we come up with to reform the health care industry be financially sound; i.e., include a realistic plan for generating sufficient revenues to cover projected costs.

No apologies.

According to last Thursday's Daily News, the deficit in this year's federal budget will be around \$1.6 trillion; revenues are anticipated to be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2.1 trillion, while expenditures are predicted to exceed \$3.6 trillion.

This lack of economic restraint is intrinsically unsustainable.

As noted in the article, "The deficit amount is a huge obstacle for an administration trying to undertake massive overhauls in health care and the true impact of deficits lies in the coming years."

Look, I believe that everyone deserves access to quality health care.

The primary issue revolves around how we can provide universal coverage in a fiscally responsible manner. I will never support any option which does not describe, in a precise and

realistic way, how the cost of maintaining the system will be covered.

Idealism must always be accompanied by realism. "Let's just do it because it's the right thing to do" makes a great slogan and has a certain emotional appeal.

But the efficacy of any proposal lies in the details.

This is a nontrivial point. Social Security and Medicare are both in danger of going bankrupt unless significant and substantial reforms are enacted in the nottoo-distant future.

Providing universal health care to our citizens, with or without a public option, would be an extremely expensive proposition. It would absolutely require higher taxes from everyone — including the middle class.

That is the cold, hard reality that many seem unwilling to face. There is no free lunch.

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