

# Financial considerations needed over health care

Once again, Robert Samuelson ("Health care nation," Dec. 5 Daily News) demonstrates he is solidly in touch with reality when it comes to the financial considerations in the health care debate.

As he astutely observes, "We all want the best health care for ourselves and loved ones. Unfortunately, what we all want as individuals may harm us as a nation."

There are basically two ways to responsibly provide some form of universal health coverage for more Americans while simultaneously maintaining some degree of fiscal responsibility: increase taxes or eliminate other programs.

Nearly all of our elected representatives are understandably reluctant to raise taxes when a majority of Americans are already struggling to make ends meet. Similarly, they also find identifying programs that could be cut in order to free up additional resources for health care equally perplexing.

One point, however, is crystal clear. Increasing the federal deficit — which is already dangerously out of control — should not be an option. Such a course of action would recklessly leverage our collective future in order to meet our present needs.

This is a path that even hardcore supporters of health care reform readily admit is inherently unsustainable.

Spending more than the revenue base can support obviously has many detrimental and inescapable consequences. As Samuelson notes, "One effect is a slow, steady and largely invisible degradation of other public and private goals." Again, the idea that we can have it all is the lie at the heart of all of our current economic woes.

Finally, as he correctly concludes, "There is no 'free market' in health care."

That's really the crux of the matter. The market works — even with health care. Let's remove the self-imposed impediments that inevitably spring from unnecessary regulation and give it a chance.

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