

Alternatives to Hillary have Demos buzzing

The elections of Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio have generated new energy in the Democratic Party's liberal wing, especially among critics of President Barack Obama's centrist course who fear a Hillary Rodham Clinton presidency would mean more of the same.

The former secretary of state's support for a tougher foreign policy than Obama's in her new book, "Hard Choices," won't assuage them.

But while Clinton's book and accompanying tour have attracted enormous attention, and her standing within the Democratic Party remains very strong, there are increasing signs its liberal wing remains determined to play a role in 2016.

While Warren said she doesn't have plans to seek the White House, a fellow New Englander seems interested. Bernie Sanders, Vermont's independent senator, told *The Nation* magazine in March, "I am prepared to run for president of the United States." But he added he had not decided whether, if he did run,

CARL LEUBSDORF



Warren



de Blasio

he'd do so as a Democrat or an independent.

Sanders recently made an Iowa appearance. And Eric Davis, professor emeritus of political science at Vermont's Middlebury College, told *The Washington Post* he thinks the onetime Socialist mayor of Burlington "is definitely going to run, and that he's more likely to run as a Democrat than as an independent."

Sanders is not Clinton's only possible challenger from the left. Former Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer, who visited Iowa last year, said in an interview with the

Weekly Standard that Clinton has shown a tendency to "shift hard right." He said he is considering running even though he also said a presidential bid "would ruin my life."

De Blasio presumably won't run, but he'd like to play a role. The Democratic National Committee named New York City one of six finalists for the party's 2016 convention, and de Blasio said he hopes to hold the main sessions in his home borough of Brooklyn, one of the nation's most liberal areas.

"The progressive spirit of New York City has never been stronger or more vibrant than it is today," he wrote the Democratic National Committee. "We believe that this spirit can energize and captivate both the Democratic Party and the nation."

In any case, if Clinton does face a challenge from the left, the Iowa caucuses that begin the nominating process would be an ideal battleground for such a challenger, just as it proved to be the perfect spot for Obama to deal her 2008 hopes a devastating setback.

Iowa caucus participants are far more liberal than the party as a whole. In 2008, for example, 54 percent of them said in entrance polls that they were very liberal or somewhat liberal, 15 points more than called themselves liberals nationally in the Gallup Poll.

Besides, Iowa's Democrats have always had a strong anti-war tendency, be it the Vietnam War a generation ago or the more recent Iraq conflict.

The degree to which some Iowa liberals distrust Clinton was evident in the reaction by one to Sanders' appearance last month at a Hall of Fame dinner in the Mississippi River town of Clinton.

"Hillary Clinton is rancid spoiled milk in comparison to Bernie Sanders," wrote Tom Fiegen in *Bleeding Heartland*, a blog about Iowa politics. He criticized her ties to Wall Street, complained that President Bill Clinton "sold out all of us" in pushing through the North American Free Trade Agreement, and concluded, "If she were ever to become president, progressives would rue the day."

Such attitudes could be a problem for Clinton if enough Democrats shared Fiegen's views. But there is no sign yet that such resentment is widespread. The Real Clear Politics average of leading polls shows she has the support of two-thirds of registered Democrats, nationally and in Iowa. Sanders didn't register, and the total backing Warren and Schweitzer was in single digits nationally and low double digits in Iowa.

As for the convention, party leaders might be wise to choose a site other than New York, given the fact that the city is a magnet for liberal interest groups and Clinton's home state. Still, it has by far the most big hotels, the best transportation system and lots of places for the partying that accompanies a national convention.

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Should the taxpayers cover insurers' ObamaCare losses?

Obama acts lawfully protecting insurers from health care losses

WAYNE MADSEN
YES

Taxpayers shouldn't have to cover health insurance losses

ED HAISLMAIER
NO

WASHINGTON — It's a mighty cold — and perhaps even snowy — summer day on Capitol Hill when you hear conservatives suggesting that private sector companies shouldn't be made whole for losses they suffer for participating in a benevolent but untested new federal program.

Yet that's exactly what many Republicans are doing because they bear a longstanding grudge against the nation's health insurers' cooperation in a sweeping new law designed to give 19 million Americans access to medical coverage for the first time in their lives.

Considering the Herculean task of trying to implement the 2,400-page bill passed by a Democratic-controlled House and Senate, President Barack Obama acted legally — one might even argue righteously — in trying to untangle its many ambiguities with a few clarifying paragraphs here and there.

After all, even then Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi told her colleagues at the time, "We have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it."

Obama and his White House staff, in fact, had a far better idea of the law's major elements than most of the senators and House members who voted for it.

The important thing in their minds was to pass the first major health care legislation in more than 40 years first and fine-tune it later.

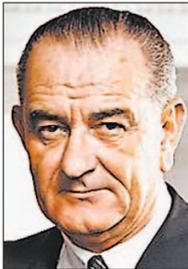
Good presidents often play politics that way. It's called leadership, and there's nothing particularly illegal or unconstitutional about it.

Of course, Pelosi, Senate Majority leader Harry Reid and now-departed Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius managed to lure both the health insurers and the big pharmaceutical manufacturers to the drafting table by enticing them with dreams of millions of new potential customers.

Free-market conservatives yelped about those companies participating in legislation they view as "socialized medicine." But the health insurers and pill makers were simply being realistic. Big business, like the notorious bank robber Willie Sutton, always goes "where the money is." In this case, the loot was big piles of cash worth multibillions.



FDR



LBJ

Of course, if the Democrats had remained true to the progressive heritage of Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson, they could have passed something easily less complex and certainly less costly — a single-payer act like those so popular in Canada and most of the European Union.

If that had happened, millions of Americans wouldn't be scrambling to find reasonably priced health insurance among a baffling complex of health care exchanges, trying to replace abruptly canceled policies or find a new doctor they like as much as the one they were repeatedly assured they could keep.

And the Democrats' Republican foes wouldn't have been handed the gold-plated issue that seems likely to give them full control of the House and Senate when the votes are tallied this fall.

Whether or not that happens, President Obama has the right and deserves the chance to rewrite as much of this discombobulated law as he can. Things are what they are, and this is just another example of the president's well-honed Chicago-style pragmatism.

And all Americans — those currently seeking first-time health coverage or those desperately seeking to replace lost policies — deserve both consistency and clarity about a piece of legislation that so clearly affects the quality of their everyday lives.

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— McClatchy-Tribune News Service

WASHINGTON — ObamaCare alters and disrupts health insurance markets in numerous ways. Exactly how individuals and employers will respond to all these changes remains highly uncertain.

This uncertainty makes it difficult for insurers to predict claims costs, much less set premiums. Naturally, insurers wish to make a reasonable profit and remain competitive in the marketplace. But finding that "sweet spot" in pricing premiums will remain elusive until they have data from several years under the new system.

The congressional Democrats who designed and enacted ObamaCare knew this would happen. That's why they included in the law three provisions that make it less risky for insurers to participate in the insurance market.

The first is a three-year "transitional reinsurance" program that imposes \$20 billion in taxes on existing employer plans and health insurance policies and transfers those funds to the ObamaCare exchanges plans. While it is a fixed amount for a limited time, it is still a tax on existing policies to subsidize those insurers offering exchange coverage.

Under the second provision — a "risk adjustment" program — insurers will transfer money among themselves to adjust for the possibility that some get more or less than their proportionate share of high-risk, high-cost enrollees. While this program is permanent, it doesn't increase subsidies to insurers; it merely reallocates money in the system.

The third provision — a "risk corridor" program — is the most problematic. This program essentially establishes a range or "corridor" for profits or losses by insurers selling exchange coverage.

If an insurer has higher-than-expected profits, the government will "claw back" some of the money. Conversely, if an insurer has higher than expected losses, the government will pay the insurer additional subsidies to offset those losses.

Like the reinsurance program, the risk corridor program, is limited to the first three years. But the risk corridor program's funding is not balanced — and that's a problem.

If many, or even all, of the insurers have excess profits, then the government

would collect a big windfall. But if many — even all — of the insurers suffer large losses, then the government is on the hook for huge subsidy payments.

Given the uncertainty insurers face in pricing the new coverage, combined with pressure from the Obama administration to keep premiums low, the more likely scenario is that there will be more big losses than big profits, resulting in a government bailout.

Earlier this year, in response to congressional concerns that the risk corridor program could turn into an insurer bailout, the Obama administration said it would run the program on a "budget neutral" basis — meaning that it wouldn't pay out more than it took in. However, the administration has now reversed that position. It is promising to pay insurers whatever it takes to cover losses they incur and, if necessary, to fund the program by diverting money.

For several years the administration has been raiding other programs — such as the prevention and public health fund sponsored by Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa — to fund ObamaCare. Congress thought it stopped that with January's omnibus appropriations bill limiting the administration's ability to transfer funds among programs. These latest efforts by the administration should be stopped.

The best response would be to simply repeal the risk corridor program. Its two sister programs — reinsurance and risk adjustment — are more than sufficient to adjust for any uncertainty faced by insurers.

The White House has re-embraced the program, not because it's sound policy, but because it offers a convenient way to hide from the public the adverse effects and true costs of ObamaCare. Institutionally, it represents another attempt by the Obama administration to circumvent Congress' authority.

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— McClatchy-Tribune News Service

President Obama must enforce our laws

There is a crisis at our border and President Obama is to blame. Last year, more than 24,000 unaccompanied alien children (UAC) were found trying to cross our southern border. This year that number is expected to more than double or triple. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) in Texas is so overwhelmed that they are sending these children, aged 12-17, to military installations in Texas, California, and Oklahoma to be temporarily housed.

President Obama has asked agencies across the federal government to divert resources in order to respond to what he calls "an urgent humanitarian situation." He tells us that these children are fleeing their home countries to escape gangs, violence, and poverty. While these may be factors, he ignores his own policies as the driving force of this unprecedented wave of illegal immigrants arriving at our doorstep.

Free pass promised

According to an internal CBP memorandum, 95 percent of 200 non-Mexican immigrants interviewed stated that the reason they came to the United States was because they'd been told that they could get a "permiso," or a "free pass," into our country. Other border patrol sources report that the children tell agents that they are here for "amnistia," or amnesty.

In 2012, under President Obama's lead-

ership, the Department of Homeland Security announced a program of deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA). DACA allows certain illegal immigrants who came here as children to request deferred prosecutorial action for a period of two years, which can be renewed. This is backdoor amnesty for an estimated 1.76 million illegals. Once again, the President has acted without congressional approval, using prosecutorial discretion to implement policies he cannot pass through legislation. Even though they are not qualified, these children hear stories filled with half-truths and come looking for their own amnesty.

Furthermore, the "free pass" these immigrants are referring to is based on the fact that those who can be placed with a relative or guardian in the United States are released to their care and told to report to local immigration officials within 15 days. It is rare that they do. Relatives and friends located within the United States are telling those back home that once you are caught you will be held for a couple days, released, and will not be deported.

They are not wrong. The executive branch has shirked its constitutional duty to "take care that the laws be faithfully ex-

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ecuted." Since coming into office, President Obama has relaxed immigration enforcement and spoken at length regarding his desire for amnesty.

The reach of his policies and rhetoric does not stop at our borders. News reports in Central America are filled with stories of the United States providing room, board, English lessons, and legal assistance while illegals wait to be released to relatives or guardians in the United States. As a result, children from these countries are showing up at our border by the hundreds each day, overwhelming our resources.

Due to this influx, our government has to send them away from the border to be housed at military installations, including Fort Sill in Oklahoma. Fort Sill will begin housing an initial 600 children as of Friday in barracks that are currently empty and awaiting renovations. We are told that Fort Sill will be used for this purpose for 120 days and will host a total of 1,200 children. However, we have been given no guarantee what will happen with the children next or that the number won't increase as the arrival of large numbers of unaccompanied alien children expected to continue.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will be caring for them and locate and place them with family

members or guardians in the U.S. Children that cannot be placed will be removed to group homes around the country. Meanwhile, the U.S. government will provide them with food, medical services, English lessons, and transportation to other locations within the country. All this will cost taxpayers an estimated \$2.3 billion.

This is not just a humanitarian crisis, the President created a national security crisis too. Children are not the only illegal immigrants pouring over our southern border, adults and families units are arriving as well. In the last 5 months, 100,000 illegal aliens have arrived at our doorstep. Border patrol agents are spread so thin that they are unable to focus on drug cartels, weapons trafficking, and other illegal activities. Furthermore, the influx of illegals is allowing those with diseases, criminal pasts, and gang ties to be released into our communities, putting all Americans at risk.

America is a nation built on the principle of the rule of law, not the rule of man. The President needs to take responsibility for the crisis at our border and send a strong message to the world that our immigration laws will be enforced.

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