

Dear friends and patriots,

Some friends have prompted me to write a letter concerning my thoughts on the recent Supreme Court decision concerning **healthcare**. This letter will be short.

My thoughts on this could be summed up with the words not thrilled. Maybe some would nod their heads in agreement and shout, "hear hear!" But they might be misreading my sentiment in saying that. I'm not thrilled because we had an opportunity to make the **health care** system better and more manageable, and by better I mean a less expansive change rather than more so. Because of the legislation that has passed and the time it takes to motivate popular opinion to coalesce sweeping ideas into law, the opportunity for what could have been is likely gone for the time being. I have long believed that a less-costly, government-directed option should be available for basic, necessary, ultimately catastrophe-preventing medical **care**. Understand that by less-costly I don't mean to suggest that it would be less expensive for the government to provide, but that the per person cost for basic **health care** overall could go down. If an entity exists that can buy in bulk, represent large groups of potential patients, and ultimately force insurers to be more competitive, and if people have better access to remedies, drugs and procedures that they should but don't currently have access to, then it's a win/win for people in general. In a 2009 interview Bill O'Reilly clumsily articulated support for this in the following excerpt: "I want, not for personally for me, but for working Americans, to have a option, that if they don't like their **health** insurance, if it's too expensive, they can't afford it, if the government can cobble together a cheaper insurance policy that gives the same benefits, I see that as a plus for the folks." While O'Reilly quickly backtracked from the statement, I thought at the time, and still believe, that this is a reasonable goal for **healthcare** at this point in America.

But instead we have a new law where Americans are strong-armed into buying a product from private companies, and the government provides assistance to do this to lower income families and individuals based upon need, which means by additional taxes and fees on employers and taxpayers in general. While I'm not a fan in theory of requiring people to pay to buy **health** insurance, the need for the requirement is clear enough: you can't simply have elderly, infirm, ailing, etc., people pay for **healthcare** while young, healthy people don't. It's similar to the rationale of having all people, including the young, pay into Social Security even though they aren't near retirement age.

And there are the situations where people who can't afford insurance run to the emergency room, one of the costliest ways to deal with ailments, because they don't have alternatives that insurance coverage makes available, every time they are ill, and this ultimately costs society. Similar are situations such as a person having a toothache that doesn't have insurance to get the tooth pulled, and he or she ends up losing all of their teeth in a rotting mess which makes it much harder to find a job when coverage for a simple procedure could have saved a whole lot of misery and expense. I have a friend whose brother died simply because he couldn't get asthma medication and couldn't afford insurance. If we can help people in these situations in our society in a way that actually cuts down on expenses, we should feel compelled to try. For this to work we need a central interest involved who is responsible, to a degree, with protecting the well being of its people; the people who freely

elect the members of that entity to represent them. If the responsibility is left instead to entities that mainly exist simply to generate profits for their directors, officers and shareholders, these services are not sufficiently offered.

We had an opportunity to make a simple, American-government based option available, but instead we've mainly left the decisions in the hands of those who exist to make a profit. Understand that with a minimum coverage option provided by the government, insurance companies would have still had the opportunity to make more comprehensive policies available for middle and high end payers who could afford them. Steak dinners would have still been available to those who chose to pay the premiums, but a government option would have been akin to making bread and vegetables available to people who are malnourished. Or you could compare it to the state making public transportation available, because we want working people to have the option to ride the bus to work if they need it, but that in no way prevents others from buying their own cars. A government option could largely exist without the built-in cost of advertising and hiring high-powered lobbyists, which would ultimately further drive down the costs of both low-end and intermediate care. As far as I can tell, the plan moving forward does little to keep health-care providers and CAT scan manufacturers from continuing to charge more, knowing that the government will ultimately guarantee that it will be paid for. Patient: "I have a headache and blurry vision." Doctor, "We've got to get you treated. I'm ordering a CAT scan and an MRI." Healthcare providers: "Cha-ching!" Insurance company: "We're only making a 4% margin on this \$X-hundred-billion-dollar-industry for pushing paper around. Boo hoo. Pay up American citizens, and/or government." So we further increase the national deficit to the benefit of corporations. And the Democrats, who supported the bill, are very much allied with the insurance companies (Republicans get plenty from the insurance industry as well), and the health care providers donate their millions to both parties, and none of the providers want to be regulated. Correction: none of them want to be regulated except in ways that keep standards high (expensive) and limit the number of new providers who can break onto the field of play. So without an active counter interest, this is what we get.

So I tell you genuinely that I'm not thrilled with the Supreme Court decision, and Obamacare in general. But given the two options, that it become law or not become law, what transpired is the choice I would make. If it means that people like my friend's brother, who died unnecessarily a man much younger than myself, can get a chance at life, then there's at least that. I also know a young person with a serious drug addiction who can't afford treatment or insurance to get it, and maybe Obamacare is a step toward a meaningful difference in such situations. But mainly the passage of this seems to be a win for the common American in the broader picture of the have-much dictating policy to the have-little that has in the last decades resulted in the have-much having more and the have-little having less. Passage of this law appears to be a victory for people who are having difficulty affording for themselves and their families the care that many of us take for granted. I consider everything in the light of loving your neighbor as yourself, and wanting for others what you would want for yourself were you in their situation, and to my perhaps overly-simplified way of thinking the right alternative is clear.

While this may be somewhat a generalization, the people fighting health care with every

fiber of their being are the same ones denying the likelihood that we can have a detrimental, long-term impact on the Earth's environment, denying that we can have a mitigating impact now and fighting any efforts to try to slow or even reverse the damage that we've caused. The Romney ads for President pledge that he "will repeal Obama's job killing regulations," as if there's some left-wing conspiracy to kill American jobs and harm the country for inimical reasons. Given America's power and status, we're actually behind the modern world in limiting greenhouse gasses and other pollution, and where we should be leading the world forward into a cleaner future, we're instead threatening to lead in reverse. You can't blame people desperate for jobs in the near term for believing that it's otherwise, and it's a good reminder that most of us want gainful employment for ourselves and our fellow citizens, but we should hold accountable leaders who would compromise the world's environment, compromising the very future survival of so many, for short-term gains. And these are the same people who pushed for and affirmed the "Citizens United" case declaring that corporations are people, with the rights of people, paving the way for unchecked and anonymous corporate contributions to legislators. While we will never be able to stop the influence of corporations and business over government, we should at least seek to stem that influence and do what we can to ensure accountability. Preserving the laws we've had in place to require that we have the opportunity to know who is giving how much to influence elections, and the laws and regulations resulting from them, should be an obvious position to defend. And these are the same people who have succeeded in getting the wealthiest in America to pay less and less of their abundance for successive decades while shouting as if the opposite has been true while our nation weakens under the financial burdens that those who have benefitted most from being American don't want to pay for. I would also throw in they're the same people who are the strongest advocates of continuing to spend billions to develop new weapons of mass destruction and innovative new devices to kill other people, as if the enemies of America won't continue to steal those technologies, ensuring that Americans will ultimately have their lives and freedoms imperiled along with everyone else. Obama says he wants to reduce our nuclear arsenal as a concession for other countries reducing or not developing their own nuclear weapons, and these same people act as though he's a traitor to America for suggesting it.

Not for a religious purpose, but as more a simple look at what has been taught, Jesus says the greatest commandments are to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. While defining what constitutes loving one's neighbor might be difficult ("Truths of God" at www.TruthsofGod.net is a ready guide), nothing prevents us from trying to assess each side in a given debate and ask what we would have for ourselves and our loved ones if in the other's position. And Jesus' message in protecting the poor is usually an admonition to do more. It's ironic to me, then, that the people who most support nuclear arms, new weapons development, and ensuring that the power of the rich and of corporations is unlimited, while denying the harm done to the poor in particular by our environmental impact, tend to be those who most strongly proclaim their faith and their love of Jesus.

But back to the issue of **health care** in particular, as a student of law I thought Justice Roberts' opinion was jurisprudentially sound. The government has the right to tax its citizens in order to provide for the needs of the people, and the government's role in this is supported by taxes. While Obama may have a technical argument that it isn't a tax, that

argument is intellectually dishonest.

Part of the job of each political party is to obstruct the ultimate goals of the other if those goals are deemed to be in opposition to the interests of the party's constituents. It has long been this way. But that isn't the only job. The job of each party, each politician, is also to further the aims of their constituents and the American people in general. And the job of any person, any group or political party, if the group or party is at least partly constituted in morality, is to not harm or endanger others unnecessarily. While people could rightly say that both American political parties have become overly obstructionist, I believe you can say as accurately that those who support the positions above that seem amoral to me have become so obstructionist as to make reasonable legislation weighted from two competing perspectives impossible. On the health care issue they seem to have made their position the one of keeping the government from helping those in need, with no other alternative offered. So instead of an opportunity to help those who are ailing with a potentially cost-effective shift away from America having the most expensive health care in the world, we have an assurance from government that the American people will pay whatever cost health-care providers and insurance companies can squeeze out of us.

Anyway, that's my view of this. We need a political alternative to liberals that is progressive but which still takes a conservative approach. Some reasonable opponents to the health care law oppose it because it stands to reason that the government guaranteeing the availability of health care for people who can't currently afford it will be an additional expense on the American taxpayer in general. We could spend too much and bankrupt the treasury if we proceed blindly and carelessly. And we don't want people to get the sense that the government will simply take care of our needs without citizens taking responsibility for themselves when possible. Any extreme position tends to have detrimental results with most issues that have competing interests, and conservatives should rightly be concerned. But the position against Obamacare being communicated to the public is "NO, NO, NO, NEVER, NEVER, NOTHING!", and I find that extreme unpalatable.

This corporatism has to be curtailed, one way or another. We have one party saying that it's wrong, but they'll take the money anyway, and another that seems to be saying corporate power should have no limit, and should in fact trump or even control an elected government of the people. I hope it changes, but until we have an alternative that seeks to promote the long-term well-being of the American people, and the lives and freedoms of human beings in general, then I see no alternative but to support policies like the health care law, though they may be partially corporate driven and corrupt to a degree. It would please me to support a thriftier, more-conservative position that could be counted on to protect people's freedoms and individual choices while still looking out for the general well being of the common person.

The American government functions well when we have competing ideas, competing platforms, working toward the same goals. It is my genuine hope for a better future for the world that we might some day have this, and that the pendulum will swing back from extremes and corporate domination and back toward the general best interest of people who believe in a common good. We need to have faith in the idea that a government run by people of our choosing can act in our collective best interest, and we need to hold those

we elect accountable for making it so. Ronald Reagan said that government IS the problem. It can be, and he clearly believed it was regarding a number of issues when he made the comment. But he didn't mean it in the sense that we should weaken government, the collective will of the people, as much as possible in every instance and just turn leadership over to private, profit-driven corporations. With the military-power exception (which is also corporate driven), the general message I'm hearing from the anti-healthcare faction is that we should do precisely that, and it's the wrong message and the wrong direction. In a world of dwindling resources, when we are especially susceptible to our own greed, we need to retain some faith in a government of the people, by the people and for the people if we hope to see our goodwill done for ourselves and for others.

So it is.