

The Right to Life

By Leah Steup

23 million Americans, aged 19 to 64, are uninsured, and 64 million more are underinsured (Bivens, 2020). Health insurance is necessary to afford medical care, resulting in little to no healthcare for these uninsured Americans. However, all American citizens deserve the right to adequate, speedy medical care. An amendment to the Bill of Rights guaranteeing medical care would give the federal government authority to establish a health care system available to all citizens. Furthermore, increased government control over hospital quality and service will ensure that no patient is ever denied care, protecting the natural rights of American citizens.

The philosophical foundation for a medical care amendment begins with natural rights ideology. John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*, written in the 17th century, heavily influenced the Constitution's writers. Locke wrote about natural rights philosophy, stating that all human beings have inherent rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of property (Tuckness, 2023). Medical care is essential to protecting one's right to life, so the right to medical care must be an amendment, not a temporary law. The federal court system can more easily overturn laws, but amendments, while hard to ratify, are even harder to remove. Thus, the right to medical care, supported by one's natural right to life, must be in the Bill of Rights.

This amendment will give Congress power to establish a universal healthcare system and regulate hospital quality, ensuring adequate medical care for all citizens. Some hospitals, including not-for-profit Allina Health System, still reject low-income patients (Kliff & Silver-Greenberg, 2023). In addition, federal law only requires hospitals to provide care in emergency situations (Emergency, 2023). However, patients still need treatment for life-threatening diseases like cancer and mental health disorders. Nevertheless, under the medical

care amendment, hospitals must accept all patients, providing life-saving care in emergency and non-emergency situations. Medical care will be guaranteed, even for patients unable to pay. In fact, the amendment will also allow the United States government to create a universal healthcare system, protecting citizens' right to medical care. While some people point to the failures of universal healthcare under Canada, a slow and ineffective system, Germany's healthcare system is a beneficial model for the United States to follow (Carroll, 2023). Germany's statutory health insurance, funded by a percentage of workers' incomes, covers nearly all medical care while maintaining an efficient system and allowing Germans to choose their health providers. High-income families can also opt out of statutory health care and use private insurance (Germany, n.d.). The U.S. should adopt this system to guarantee medical care for everyone while ensuring freedom of choice, and a constitutional right to medical care guarantees Congress the power to do so.

A medical care amendment would also positively impact the American economy and improve citizens' standard of living. A study shows that countries with universal healthcare have longer life expectancies than countries without universal healthcare. The countries with healthcare have an average life expectancy of 76.7 years while the countries without have an average of 66.8 years (Pandey, 2022). Guaranteed medical care, allowing for universal healthcare, will improve healthcare quality, resulting in increased longevity for U.S. citizens. Furthermore, guaranteed healthcare would allow workers to take home higher wages because employers would not have to pay for employees' insurance. Workers' job quality will also increase, allowing them to choose jobs fit for their skills, not deny those jobs to secure employer-provided health insurance coverage (Bivens, 2020). Both of these effects will bolster

the American economy by improving productivity and increasing expendable income. These two beneficial effects support the case for a medical care amendment.

All U.S. citizens deserve the right to adequate medical care, and a universal health care system can efficiently accomplish this. As a result, Congress and the states should amend the Bill of Rights, adding a right to medical care.

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