

**The Minnesota Free Market Institute Weekly Update
Friday, July 31, 2009**

Milton Friedman Event is Today! (July 31)

The Minnesota Free Market Institute Milton Friedman Birthday Event is **Friday, July 31st, 2009 at the Metropolitan, 4-7 PM; 5418 Wayzata Blvd. Golden Valley, MN 55416.**

The Chairman of the Minnesota Free Market Institute, Tom Kelly will open the program and David Strom, Senior Policy Fellow at the Minnesota Free Market Institute will deliver remarks on Milton Friedman's legacy for Freedom. Free hors d'oeuvres, cash bar. There will be a free drawing for 10 copies of Milton Friedman's signature work *Free to Choose* and a few limited edition Milton Friedman commemorative posters

Climate Change Symposium is August 19 Sign Up Now!



Freedom vs. Perfection

In his [letter to his girls](#) published in *Parade* Magazine, Barack Obama writes that when he was a young man, he "thought life was all about me - about how I'd make my way in the world, become successful, and get the things I want. But then the two of you came into my world ... that's why I ran for President: because of what *I want* for you for you and every child in this nation." (Emphasis mine)

Obama then goes on to list at least 10 things that "I want" for his girls and the nation.

Obama's letter is interesting (and relevant to us) because it reveals that despite his statement to the contrary, life for the president is still all about what he wants - not what he wants for himself, but what he wants for his daughters. The difference between young Barack and President Obama is that President Obama has the power to implement his vision - irrespective of my vision for my life or your vision for yours.

President Obama fails to understand that life to him is still "all about him," and that should scare us.

"Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive," wrote C.S. Lewis. "It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience."

In her speech at the Demoncratic National Convention, Michelle

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Obama recalled the first time she heard young Barack speak. She recalled how moved she was by his message of "world as it is" versus "world as it should be." That theme recurred throughout her DNC speech:

"And he urged us...to strive for the world as it should be...mold our future into the shape of our ideals...All of us driven by a simple belief that the world as it is just won't do - that we have an obligation to fight for the world as it should be."

So who or what must President Obama "fight" to create his vision of the world as it should be?

A world "as it should be" cannot tolerate individual liberty and free choice lest choices are made that make that world less than it should be; conversely, a free society will never be perfect; individuals in a free society will always make less than perfect choices.

Coerced perfection or God-given liberty? As Milton Friedman who we honor this Friday so aptly wrote, it is "A Time to Choose."

Craig Westover is a Senior Policy Fellow at the Minnesota Free Market Institute

Back to the Future on Health Care

[Support for the administration's health care plan has shifted away](#) as more of the details hit the streets. Americans have become increasingly aware that there are hidden costs in supposedly "free" health care. As the elements of the planned legislation are discussed, many have learned that they would wind up being worse off than they are now. If you are even somewhat happy with your current plan, be it an individual plan or an employer plan, you may not be happy to know that it is likely to go away if the so-called "public option" with enforced low costs comes into being. What it would be replaced with, under this incomplete proposal with sweeping changes, is a big question mark.

If you are old enough, you may remember the HMO (Health Maintenance Organization) controversy of the 1980s and early 90s. In some parts of the country, HMOs were new institutions at the time, and like the current reform, an attempt at cost savings and improvements in service. But they soon gained a bad reputation for overruling doctors and denying patients' coverage for treatments that the back office had determined were not cost effective. The public rebelled when confronted with the idea of bean counters making life and death and quality of life decisions for them and for their loved ones. There were lawsuits, legislation was passed and in the end, the insurers were told what they could not exclude as part of basic coverage. Since insurance is regulated by the individual states, as well as at the Federal level, exclusions vary widely and with them, the price of coverage. As the coverage widened, the cost of insurance went up. It is no wonder that individual health insurance is out of reach for many people and employers are struggling to keep up with costs as well. Government has done its best to make it unaffordable.

Why does anyone think that government bean counters will be more accountable than the ones employed by the private

insurers? According to the most recent polls, an increasing number of people don't.

A 2002 movie, *John Q* was about an HMO denying coverage for a child's heart transplant. The father, played by Denzel Washington, takes doctors and nurses hostage at gunpoint until they agree to treat him. Although this movie is fiction, there was a very similar incident in Canada in 1999 and the father wasn't trying to get his child anything so costly or difficult as a heart transplant—he was just trying to get him treated for an acute asthma attack. Henry Masuka was told that no pediatricians were available at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto and that there would be a 45 minute wait. In the Hollywood version the private insurance company/provider is the villain who sends a good man over the edge but in the true life case, it was a government managed system that had that role.

The health care reform was originally sold as an improvement to the status quo. There is no doubt that that costs are continuing to spiral out of control, making insurance and health care itself a major burden for individuals and employers. But the cost drivers are the growing number of mandates imposed by the government and the government subsidies which have increased with the expansion of S-CHIP and Medicare. Extending subsidized health care to the rest of the population will distort prices even further which will lead inevitably to rationing and price controls.

We've seen that movie before and it doesn't end well.

Margaret Martin is a Policy Fellow at the Minnesota Free Market Institute

Must Read

Jonathan Weisman. [In Savings Shocker, The Government Discovers That Paper has Two Sides](#). *Wall Street Journal*. (subscription may be required).

The next time you hear a politician complain that government is cutting important programs "to the bone" email him or her a copy of this column by the Wall Street Journal's Jonathan Weisman. Weisman tells us that among the drastic measures being taken are: The Justice Department copying documents on both sides, the forest service not re-painting their vehicles green, using e-mail instead of copying press clippings, using internet and videoconferencing instead of travel for meetings. You might well ask why they haven't considered these changes before. In all, the cuts only total about \$100 Million That is about 0.006% of the estimated federal deficit.

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King Banaian *SCSU Scholars*

- [The deadweight loss of higher taxes](#)
- [Limited time offer! Act fast!](#)
- [No signs of recovery up here](#)
- [Neither necessary nor unnecessary to whom?](#)
- [Don't mention the Germans!](#)
- [Today's QALY homework](#)
- [If California wanted to do this right](#)

- [I don't negotiate with the uninformed](#)
- [Alternative energy in the UK and Midwest](#)

*The Minnesota Free Market Institute Weekly Update is edited by
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