

**Republican Perspective**  
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**by Ed Manning**

**NORDIC WARNING**

*“Somehow we think that we can afford to pay for doctors, hospitals, medication and a government bureaucracy to administer it.” Thomas Sowell, American economist*

The champions of “Medicare for All” may wish to hit the pause button. It would be worth their while to examine what is happening in their favorite Norwegian countries. The government of Finland collapsed in early March over trying to reform its state provided healthcare. The entire cabinet resigned a month before the general election.

Finland has a population of 5.5 million, about the same as either Colorado or Wisconsin. If Finland can't make it viable, how will the US with a population of 327 million? The answer from Progressives and Social Democrats is “we know how to do it better.” You betcha! “If you like your Doctor, you can keep your Doctor.” Ask how that's working out for your kids.

In 2015, the Finns' elected a center-right coalition to fix its economic problems. A centerpiece of the new government was to reform healthcare. Finland is facing an aging population with a heavier demand for health services. The government estimates that by 2030 around 26 percent of the population will be aged over 65, from around 21 percent now. Over the last 12 years, several Finnish governments have tried and failed to reign in the rising costs of healthcare. All have met with resistance.

In Finland, responsibility for government health care rests within the 280+ municipalities. It is a decentralized approach but results with inefficiencies. The current reform would reduce the healthcare centers to 18 regions. The change would reduce the budget in 2029 to \$18.3 billion euro from a projected \$21.3 billion.

Resigning Centre Party Prime Minister Juha Sipila said: “We need reforms, there is no other way for Finland to succeed. My government works on a ‘result or out’ principle... one has to carry responsibility in politics. There is no way ahead. I am hugely disappointed.”

Progressives and Social Democrats point to Finland as the shining example of the welfare state. 2020 presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders touts Finland as a good model of his socialist cause. The problem is that the model is not sustainable. Bank of Finland governor, Olli Rehn, told reporters at a Helsinki news conference that Finland's social and healthcare systems need reforming to ensure the sustainability of its public finances.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an inter-governmental agency founded to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. 34 countries including the US are members. The OECD reports that the Finnish healthcare system is underfunded.

Unlike “Medicare for All” which would abolish employer provided health insurance, Finland has a private primary healthcare insurance system. Most employers pay for their employees to have private primary healthcare, but do not pay for employee families. The Finnish Medical Association reports that nearly 20 percent of the doctors are partly in private practice. Even so, in 2012, 80 percent of the Finnish population had to wait more than two weeks to see a General Practitioner.

Rising healthcare costs are not limited to Finland. Other Nordic countries have also grappled with the need to cut costs. Reuters reports that Sweden is to gradually raise its retirement age and has opened up parts of the healthcare system to the private sector in a bid to reduce costs boost efficiency. Denmark will gradually increase its retirement age to 73 — the highest in the world — while cutting taxes and unemployment benefits to encourage people to work more.

One ray of hope comes from the Kaiser Family Foundation. They found that 58 percent of Americans oppose "Medicare for All" if told it would end private health insurance plans. 60 percent oppose it if it requires higher taxes.

Do you believe that Democrat politicians, George Soros, Tom Steyer, and the Hollywood elite will wait in the queue for medical treatment? Not a chance!