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## Many question direction of health care reform

*By John McCarthy and Kaustuv Basu*  
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After a summer of often-heated debate, and as various bills work their way through Congress, many people have formed firm opinions about health care debate. And it seems that little being said now will change their minds.

For many of those who attended a health care forum in <http://www.floridatoday.com/tribune> target="\_blank" style="text-decoration:underline;">Cocoa on Wednesday, the opinion is not good. To them, the reforms being proposed will lead to more problems, not fewer.

"Unfortunately, there is a lot of distrust of government right now," said Lynne Grace, of Rockledge, before the forum started. "I wish it was as simple as they make it seem."

A 65-year-old who recently enrolled in Medicare, Grace said she would gladly return to the insurance she had as a retiree from the Miami-Dade County government. "My private insurance was better and cost less."

One thing that caught her attention during Wednesday night's session, held at Brevard Community College's Cocoa campus, was the fact the <http://www.dukehealth.org> target="\_blank" style="text-decoration:underline;">Duke University Medical Center has 900 insurance clerks while a comparable hospital in Canada has only two or three. "But," she asked, "where is the care better? They're all coming here."

As a lung cancer survivor, Debra Japp, 56, of <http://www.floridatoday.com/press> target="\_blank" style="text-decoration:underline;">Merritt Island, already has had extensive experience with both health care and health insurance. She is not sure she favors the proposed reforms. "Because of my existing condition, my health insurance costs are high. I want more information, and as the health care debate has gone on, I have wondered if my costs are going to go up even more."

After the session, Japp said she still didn't know enough about the government proposals. "I am better informed after tonight's meeting, but I feel I have more questions now."

A common theme among the audience members was distaste for government-run insurance, even among those who have Medicare.

"How are we going to pay for this?" asked Don Forward, 70, of Titusville before the forum. "Where does it say in the constitution that government has to give out health care? I think the insurance company is more than capable of handling this. Less government is always better."

His beliefs were reinforced by what he heard during the session. "I learned that the insurance companies are fighting to keep free enterprise going."

One of the panelists, Dr. Raymond Bellamy, director of surgery of the <http://med.fsu.edu> target="\_blank" style="text-decoration:underline;">Florida State University College of Medicine, said he doesn't favor any of the current reform proposals. They will just continue the "current bureaucratic mess," he said.

Bellamy said he is a strong proponent of a government single-payer plan, a system that he said has

proven to work in every other industrialized nation in the world. "Just cover everybody."

A fellow panelist, Randy Kammer, vice president of <http://www.bcbsfl.com/> style="text-decoration:underline;">Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, said Americans don't want that. "The public has been very clear that they are not in favor of a public option," he said, to cheers from many in the audience.

Grace said she is one of those firmly opposed to government control of health insurance. "I am opposed to socialism, and that's what that is."

There were a few supporters of government run health care at the session. Margaret Woodard of Merritt Island is a former intensive care nurse who has been pushing for a single-payer system since the 1970s. "You have to decide whether (health care) is a right or a privilege. I believe it is right."

Even among people who disagreed about the proposed reforms, there was a consensus that reform of some kind was needed. "We do need to do something," Grace said. "But we need to do the right thing. We should take a deep breath and not rush anything."

## Additional Facts

At a glance

Panelists at the health care forum were Randy Glatfelter, vice president of the Florida Hospital Association; Lori Parnham State Director of AARP Florida; Randy Kammer, vice president of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida and Dr. Raymond Bellamy, director of surgery of the Florida State University College of Medicine.

The event was sponsored by the Space Coast Tiger Bay Club and FLORIDA TODAY.

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