

# Inquiring Minds Topic – 9 August 2019

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## Health Care Issues in the 2020 Election

**Or, who would have thought health care could be so complicated.**

Health care was said to have been one of the major issues in the 2018 mid-terms. In spite of multiple attempts, the Republicans have been unable to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) even when they have controlled all three branches of the government. In spite of its many possible weaknesses, the ACA still lives, if barely. The ACA's strengths may have saved it from repeal: prohibiting denial of coverage due to pre-existing health conditions, its increased health care access for millions of Americans through ACA and Medicaid expansion, its partial funding by built-in tax increases, its coverage of children in the household until age 26 and some built-in incentives to increase the quality of health care.

Disappointingly, the current Democratic presidential candidates and the Republican Party have been unable to develop and present clear alternatives or improvements for our health care non-system. If you are confused as to where the Democratic Presidential candidates stand, you are not alone. The Washington Post has made multiple attempts to present the candidates' positions- showing that most of the candidates have changed their positions as the debates have gone on. Bernie Sanders is alone in stating clearly that he favors Medicare for All without any private health insurance. Warren says she favors Medicare for all and would do away with private health insurance. But, her website shows she supports a buy-in to Medicare and the Schatz bill of a Medicaid buy-in. Harris wanted Medicare for All with no private insurance in the debate but the next day backed off from that position. The candidates' positions on drug coverage seems to be more clear with most candidates favoring allowing Medicare to negotiate on drug prices, allowing import of drugs from foreign countries and allowing the US government to produce and sell certain generic drugs in order to lower their prices.

The Republican position on health care seems to be wait and see the final Democratic Party position and then oppose it.

**Instead of having a reading to start the discussion, I'd like to suggest that you think about and articulate what you would like to see as the health care policy in the election in 2020. Do you favor?**

1. Repeal the ACA and put nothing in its place.
2. Strengthen the ACA
  - a. Allow changes/additions.
  - b. Allow buy-in to Medicare as public option
3. Adopt a single payer insurance system, such as Medicare for All,
  - a. abolish private health Insurance
  - b. but allow private supplemental insurance
4. Allow buy-in to Medicare now
  - a. Work toward single payer as a public option over a number of years
  - b. Let everyone who likes their current private insurance keep it
5. Or, maybe you have other ideas.

### **But what about medications?**

1. Allow importation of generics from foreign countries?
2. Allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices?
3. Allow the government to produce and sell certain generic drugs, such as new antibiotics or vaccines which the private system seems unable to manage to produce with sufficient profit?

