

PAY2PLAY CECI: “THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PLAYERS” LOVE MAXTAX

Pay2Play Ceci Connolly has an article out summing up the reaction she’s seeing to Max Baucus’ health care plan:

As they scoured the 223-page document, many of the most influential players found elements to dislike, but not necessarily reasons to kill the effort. Most enticing was the prospect of 30 million new customers.

In order of appearance, here are the people she cites in her article (I’ve bolded the ones she has actual quotes from):

- Max Baucus
- Obama
- Liberal Democrats and allies, particularly labor unions
- Republicans
- Major industry leaders and interest groups
- White House strategists
- Obama
- **John D. Rockefeller**
- Lawmakers and lobbyists
- **Ron Wyden**
- **Neil Trautwein, a vice president of the National Retail Federation**
- Leaders of the Business Roundtable and the National Federation of Independent Business

- Drugmakers and hospitals
- **Kenneth E. Thorpe**, an Emory University professor and Clinton administration official (noting that health care providers stand to make more than they'll lose)
- Max Baucus
- Several trade associations
- The medical device industry (described "recruiting" four senators to roll back fees on its industry)
- **One White House aide**

In all, Ceci presents a landscape in which the most important players—aside from two Senators who have been slighted in the process thus far—are trade industry groups. And the most important issue for them is the profit they stand to make off of taxing America's middle class to make them wealthier.

Now, to be fair to Pay2Play Ceci, that's unashamedly the point of her article—that while the bill has pissed off Democrats and Republicans, it has thus far lulled the industry with dreams of forthcoming riches.

But behind the rhetorical fireworks was a sense that the fragile coalition of major industry leaders and interest groups central to refashioning the nation's \$2.5 trillion health-care system remains intact.

And also to be fair to Pay2Play Ceci, it's clear that these players **were** the prime movers behind this bill. The story is absolutely accurate—though that doesn't mean it has any business being told.

Nothing demonstrates the degree to which actual politicians—much less their constituents—have

become mere bystanders as the health care industry crafts up a plan to get 30 million new captive customers.

One more point on this (so I can count this as my daily thrashing of the WaPo). An article like this is the natural outcome of the WaPo's attempt to be a broker of the key players (not surprisingly, the same industry hacks highlighted here) in the health care debate. From the time Katharine Weymouth first recruited Pay2Play Ceci to invite her clients sources to the Pay2Play salons, it pretty much guaranteed that Pay2Play Ceci would come in at precisely this moment and present the industry's judgment—that they'd be perfectly happy getting 30 million new customers with almost no payback—as "news."