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## IS HEALTHCARE A RIGHT ..... OR JUST A GOOD THING?



By Stephen L. Bakke  July 6, 2017

### *Here's what provoked me:*

*We constantly hear the claim that healthcare is a "Constitutional Right." When making those claims, proponents of the idea introduce too many problems to the healthcare debate. We don't need more things to argue about. We do need ways to find agreement about healthcare payment reform.*

### *Here's my response:*

#### **Is Healthcare a Right ..... or Just a Good Thing?**

Healthcare payment system reform is facing gridlock in Washington. In an attempt to strengthen their particular arguments, many democrats are making the claim that healthcare is a Constitutional Right. I believe that is a different debate, and introducing it is unhelpful in the search for agreement.

When discussing "rights," it's appropriate to refer to the U.S. Constitution because it's best to have a standard – a benchmark. We should then consider the following:

- Quality healthcare shouldn't have to be debated on a constitutional basis. That introduces an argument that will never produce agreement.
- In fact, there's confusion over what right is being debated. Is it insurance coverage, or is it quality outcomes? Often, that distinction isn't made.
- It's tempting to attribute the designation of "inalienable rights," as described by our Founders, to all "good things." Those Constitutional Rights were endowed by our creator and can't be "bought and sold." Healthcare service is something very different.

Instead of complicating the debate with the "inalienable right" claim, let's agree that quality healthcare is, quite simply, a good thing. Let's also agree that achieving quality healthcare is worth the expenditure of great effort and major resources, and it should be available to all.