

March 18, 2013

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

An axiom of politics is to avoid using the words of your opponents. The Republicans in Congress are pressing to have you concede a reduction in what they call “entitlements,” mostly meaning Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

The Democrats also use the word “entitlements,” in resisting the madness of the cruel, oligarchic proposals of Paul Ryan, John Boehner and Eric Cantor. But neither they nor you include under entitlements the vast giveaway of corporate welfare – subsidies, inflated contracts, handouts, loan guarantees, bailouts, tax expenditures and others too numerous to mention. These are real and significant entitlements. Corporate recipients do not pay for these giveaways. They use these freebies to cloak corporate mismanagement, increase retained corporate profits and boost staggering executive compensation.

Peoples’ entitlements, by contrast, are paid in significant degree by the taxes of the people who receive them, when they retire or are in need of health care. Quite a difference!

Don’t fall for the cornering maneuver by the Republicans to get you to agree to reductions in *benefits* from Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. You know this tactic, but you need to be more vocal. Insist that *huge savings can come from the vendors* who unlawfully or deceptively take profits from Medicaid and Medicare. The long article in *Time* magazine by Steve Brill titled “Bitter Pill: Why Medical Bills Are Killing Us” (March 4, 2013) documents some of the rampant price gouging by the health care industry.

There is also the outright billing fraud on Medicare and Medicaid which both the GAO and the leading specialist, Professor Malcolm Sparrow of Harvard University (author of the book *License to Steal*), have declared to be at least ten percent of health care sales. That overall would exceed \$270 *billion* last year and the large part ripped off from Medicare and Medicaid is in the tens of billions yearly. Please note this is just *billing fraud and abuse* which your Department of Health and Human Services can document. I am sure Professor Sparrow would be glad to help.

Add a serious enforcement program to reduce both unnecessary health services, as documented by the Dartmouth Medical School team, and the costly medical malpractice and medical errors and you have a long range plan for major efficiencies. And taking away the remaining subsidy of Medicare Advantage received by the health insurance companies would further facilitate preserving benefits for those who paid for and relied on these social compacts.

As for Social Security, propose an increase in the amount of higher incomes having to pay Social Security taxes. This single move would relieve the pressure years from now on reducing benefits for the needy elderly.

Many citizens would look forward to such clarifications of language and action that embrace equities and remedies scarcely discussed in this deliberately narrowed debate on "entitlements."

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph Nader". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ralph" and last name "Nader" clearly distinguishable.

Ralph Nader

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