

## Could This Government Manage Your Health Care?

by James H. Miller

Health Care is an issue destined to dominate Wisconsin politics in 2007. As Democrats made enormous legislative gains last November, health care has moved to the top of the list as the most important issue in Wisconsin. Liberals are now saying that Wisconsin health care should be managed by the public sector, with many supporting a single-payer system run by the state. It is going to be one tough fight.

Everything seems to be on the side of the left on this issue - polls, the public mood, and rising health care costs favor them. But before you get too depressed, always remember something that the rest of us have going for us - Madison bureaucrats. At a time when there is enormous public concern over identity theft, Wisconsin's Department of Revenue has supplied a definitive reason why you never want government to run anything.

For hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin taxpayers who suffered through the long form to pay their extraordinarily high tax bill for 2005, they were rewarded with the following by their government. They received their 2006 tax forms in the mail with not only their name and address, but also their Social Security numbers on the outside of their state income tax forms. At a time when everyone is concerned with protecting their personal identities, not to mention the fact that Wisconsin has a new law going into effect to fight identity theft, Madison bureaucrats have designed a program that allows anyone who is interested in finding out your Social Security number to simply check your tax form in your mailbox.

Rather than apologize, the number-two chief bureaucrat blamed the printer for the screw-up. Of course, the obvious question is why any government agency would send Social Security numbers to a printer, when this confidential information has absolutely nothing to do with someone's name and address. It is astonishing that the bureaucrats never even bothered to check what was being sent out to taxpayers across the state.

Another stunning aspect of this was that people who filed electronically also had these forms mailed to them. While it may be 2007 in most parts of the world, Madison bureaucrats still like to send their forms out, no doubt signing off on the contracts with quills rather than any kind of modern pen.

The other predictable reaction was to threaten an investigation of the printers. The thought would never cross their minds that someone in the bureaucracy might be responsible for this or show any kind of accountability that someone was in fact incompetent and made an incredibly silly mistake. Their solution was to try to retrieve the the tax forms from the post office. Apparently they succeeded in Madison. Big surprise!

This in itself raises another interesting issue. Apparently, people who work in the Department of Revenue, their bosses, and the governor of Wisconsin did not have this problem. Their tax forms will not be available to anyone who wants to see their addresses and Social Security numbers. As often happens with state government, there was a benefit for those who live inside the beltline.

But for the rest of us, well, too bad. In fact, the Department of Revenue continues to insist that this is not a big deal. After all their identities won't be stolen. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, however, has made it a big deal. They have run front page news stories on this folly, and have followed it up with a very strong editorial. I suspect that one of the things that happened was that people at the *Journal Sentinel* who love Governor Doyle suddenly found *their* tax forms with *their* Social Security numbers delivered to their homes. Candidly, they and taxpayers across the state didn't like it.

Finally, anyone who thinks that one of these oafs should run your health care system might ask themselves a question. Would you want one of these bureaucrats to decide a life-and-death health care issue for you or your children? If yes, consider yourself a true Madison progressive. If no, consider yourself sane.