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We need the public option

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For The Sun to say that we should ditch the public option to avoid an "ugly debate" is to give veto power to those willing to turn the debate ugly, by whom I mean the ranting and raving right-wingers with their shameless nonsense about death panels and National Socialism ("Wise compromise," Dec. 10). Talk about rewarding bad behavior.

The public option may be, as you say, a "means to an end," but it's not just any means toward the ends of competition and cost control - it's by far the best means, according to the Congressional Budget Office and other objective observers. Compare it to the means that the Senate is now settling for. Using nonprofit insurance companies to compete with UnitedHealth and WellPoint will be inadequate - the status quo amply demonstrates how nonprofits like Blue Cross/Blue Shield compete by acting more like the for-profits, not the other way around. And relying on regulation to rein in profit-driven insurers is destined to fail as long as they dominate their markets and have such a powerful incentive to game the system.

Why should we find convoluted ways to achieve the exact same ends that we would get to most simply and directly through the public option? In order to please two or three or four senators who are in the pockets of the for-profit insurers?

Moreover, there are other important issues to fix in the Senate bill besides the public option. The House bill is far better on affordability, fair financing and the employer mandate as well.

So I have an alternative proposal to ditching the public option: Ditch the filibuster. Restore democracy to the U.S. Senate. Where did the Founding Fathers write that every single legislative action should require a super-majority? They would no doubt be appalled to see how we have become paralyzed by minority rule. Matthew Weinstein, Baltimore

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