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## **Gail Wilensky**

### **Former Director, Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services**

**Dr. Gail Wilensky** is a health economist and senior fellow at Project HOPE, an international health foundation. There her focus has been on strategies to reform health care, with particular emphasis in recent years on Medicare, comparative effectiveness research, and military health care.

Dr. Wilensky directed the Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services from 1990 to 1992. She served in the White House as a senior health and welfare adviser to President GHW Bush.

She is a trustee of the Combined Benefits Fund of the United Mine Workers of America and is on the Board of Regents of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) in Bethesda and that of the Geisinger Health System Foundation, a physician-led, highly regarded health system in Pennsylvania

### **Subject Area/Topic: SHOULD OBAMACARE BE CHANGED?**

**Highlights:** Dr. Wilensky's central message was that while there is no precedent for significant public benefits being taken away once granted, she believes that there are significant flaws in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that need to be corrected. Her talk concentrated on what she sees as imperfections in the ACA, but she cited a recent article she co-authored that describes proposed alternative approaches. (Replacing the Affordable Care Act and other Suggested Reforms [http://www.gailwilensky.com/jama/Replacing\\_the\\_Affordable\\_Care\\_Act.asp](http://www.gailwilensky.com/jama/Replacing_the_Affordable_Care_Act.asp).)

The ACA has reduced the number of uninsured from 15 or 16% to 11 or 12%. While she sees this as progress, Dr. Wilensky believes that more needs to be done. She said that "...the ACA is not comprehensive health reform and most of the expansion is in Medicare coverage."

Regarding centrally controlled European style health care system, Dr. Wilensky said she often hears "Other countries do it, why can't we?" Her answer is "We are not them...a lot of [Americans] don't want tightly managed systems." We tend to want the latest and greatest technology, whereas in Europe, for example, the health departments want to see proof that what's new produces better results than what is already in use before they approve the new drug/technology.