

Government eliminates competition

Father Joseph Breighner, you wrote (CR, Jan. 21) about your difficulty finding the unmarked Social Security office on West Street in Towson and then having to wait two hours in that office before being told that they couldn't wait on you. You mentioned that a funeral home and two auto dealerships nearby had clearly visible signs out front. People inside those business establishments would have been eager to wait on you, possibly offering more service than you ever wanted. The difference is, those businesses have competition and Social Security, a government agency, does not. Competition does wonders. I'm not suggesting that we have two Catholic Reviews, but even nonprofits such as hospitals serve better because of competition. The point of this letter, which you couldn't possibly have figured out, is the so-called public option in the proposed federal health care plan. A government-run program, if subsidized by tax dollars, can reduce or even eliminate competition. People are leery, not because they don't want needy people to have access to health care, but because of the possible negative effect on their health care. They don't want to replace the gentle fib, "The doctor will be with you shortly," with "Congratulations on finding our office. Come back tomorrow." The public option needs to be thought out and drafted carefully, probably more than this letter, to preserve competition.

P.S. I too had difficulty finding that office.