

Say it ain't so:

It has long been said that every member of the Senate thinks that he or she would make a better President than the President we actually have. It doesn't matter who that President is, from which party or whether he is right leaning or tilting left. Members of the Senate are, generally speaking, wealthy and well connected people who are used to wielding power. They have very healthy egos and they all believe that they could be a truly great President, a Lincoln or a Roosevelt.

They like being on TV and in the other media, they like holding hearings which keep them on TV and they like being the critical vote on a piece of legislation which also keeps them on TV. Come to think of it, everyone else in the country performs self serving stunts in order to be on television so why not members of the Senate?

Joe Lieberman is a Senator from Connecticut. He has all of the qualities I mentioned above and more. He has the added edge that he thinks he should have been Vice President of the United States. He did win the popular vote after all. It doesn't matter that he was even duller, less eloquent and even more invisible than Al Gore. He thinks he was robbed. It doesn't matter that Al Gore could not carry his home State. Joe Lieberman was robbed.

That's four or eight years of prime time coverage we're talking about. That's four or eight years of being on the news whenever you want to be. He thinks he should have been the Vice President from 2000 until 2008 and he's mad as heck that the Electoral College and his patrician running mate and Florida Republicans stole it from him. That's a lot of pent up frustration to carry around. That's a lot of wincing and whining whenever Cheney or Biden shows up on the tube. It really rankles him that those hundreds of hours of coverage, all those sound bites, all those pictures could have been his. Joe Lieberman, Vice President of the United States.

He has hit on an effective way to snatch some of that attention back. In the last few weeks he has announced that he is A) against the public option for health care and B) that he is against the expansion of Medicare. Throughout his entire career in politics Joe Lieberman has been staunchly in favor of both of those ideas. Not just a supporter but a proponent of legislation to enact one or both of them. Not just an in step Liberal who was toeing the party line but an out front leader in the fight for expanded health coverage and the big Government role in that expansion. So what happened?

There are those who maintain that Senator Lieberman is not the brightest light on Capitol Hill. They imply that he never thought much about what he was in favor of in the first place so it should come as no surprise that he doesn't know much about what he's for now. They say that, for Joe, one position is as good as another so long as you don't have to read too much. Therein might lay the key to the Senator's recent course change.

If one position is as good as another then it might make sense to choose the one that gets him all that air time that he was missing. If the public option for health care is no better or worse than leaving health care to the big insurers then why not choose the one that gets his phone ringing and video recorders rolling? Why not choose the position that puts him in the limelight he so richly (in his own mind) deserves?

This is all rather disappointing don't you think? I would have hoped that a man who has had a long and influential career in politics would value integrity above fame and principle over publicity. Wait, hold it, what am I saying? This is exactly the kind of grandstand exhibitionism that we see all the time in Washington. Lieberman just happens to be the Senate's preening publiophile du jour. In the recent health care debate other Senators including Baucus, Nelson and Coburn, have taken their shot at national prominence and have run toward the cameras, shouting at them, "Hey everybody, I could be the deciding vote! I could be the guy to kill this thing!"

I hope I'm wrong about your motives and you could help me here Senator. I feel a lot like the little boy who ran up to Shoeless Joe Jackson after he was banned from baseball for his involvement in the Black Sox scandal. I feel like standing in front of Senator Lieberman and pleading, "Say it ain't so, Joe, just say it ain't so." But I fear I would get the blank stare that he's so good at followed by the blah, blah, blah that has become his TV trademark.