

## **Tuesday, Aug, 18, 2009, Santa Rosa, CA – LIVE CHAT: Virtual town hall meeting on health care reform (pressdemocrat.com)**

### **9:52 a.m. PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 3 hours ago

We'll be starting the health care live chat in a few minutes. Thanks for joining.

### **10:02 Comment From Al & Bev Bertaina**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We need to cut private health insurance costs; CEO salaries & bonuses, shareholders' dividends, profits spent on advertising including drug ads, political lobbying and everything else that doesn't go to help patients get and stay well. How will we do that without a public option?

### **10:02 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Greetings everyone.

This is Paul Gullixson. I'm the editorial director at The Press Democrat. With me here is Editorial Writer Jim Sweeney.

President Obama has admonished the nation to have a "healthy" discussion about health care reform. That's our objective here today in this live discussion.

Thanks for joining us.

To start with, I would like to offer a brief anecdote. You may have heard this mentioned in a recent edition of "This American Life" by Ira Glass. It concerned the heart-wrenching story of 59-year-old Robin Batan who testified to the House subcommittee on oversight and investigations that when she developed invasive breast cancer, her insurance company, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, dropped her coverage. Why? Because of a pre-existing condition. – dermatitis. Her dermatologist called Blue Cross to say Batan was treated for acne, not, as the company contended, a precancerous condition. To no avail.

She lost her coverage. Fact: For several of the major insurance carriers, there are some 1,400 conditions that can be used to cancel an insurance policy.

So the issue of health care reform is not just expanding coverage to cover the 47 million Americans who have no coverage. It's providing peace of mind to the millions who fear they will lose their coverage if they change their job or, God forbid, get sick and see their policy canceled for a pre-existing condition.

Legislation now working its way through the House of Representatives would ban discrimination for pre-existing conditions. Among other things, it also would cap how much patients could be charged for out-of-pocket "co-pays" and other expenses. But it comes at a price.

Here's the first two questions to get us started:

"Which is more costly and unsustainable in the long run: health care reform or the status quo?"  
and

"Is health care reform dead without a 'public option.'"

Jim, what do you think?

## **10:04 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Check that. My question is: "Which is more costly in the long run: Health care reform or the status quo."

## **10:04 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I think it depends on the shape of the reform package. The current system isn't sustainable, and without cost controls a reform plan won't be either.

I'm not convinced but I tend to think a public option would help put the brakes on rising costs.

## **10:04 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Those of us over 85 are really feeling at risk. Our private insurance, even tho costly, bases it's coverage on medicarte coveragead.

## **10:04 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The most costly situation is to NOT switch over to a medicare for all system:

## **10:06 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I think the question is a fair one. How will insurance companies be kept in check without a public option to force them to keep costs down. Some are arguing for a co-op system. But is a nationwide co-op feasible and can it be competitive with national carriers? I have my doubts

## **10:06 Comment From Gretchen Barry**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Until I see specifics about the proposed co-ops, health reform is dead without a public option - at the very least.

## **10:06 Comment From Susie Newland.**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

too fast. I hadn't completed my statement about 85 year olds!!

## **10:07 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Sorry about that Susie. Go right ahead and finish your comment.

## **10:07 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

What do people think of requiring health insurance coverage as we're required to carry auto insurance?

## **10:07 Comment From patty van**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I agree....health care access is a human right,. not a privilege for those who can afford commercial insurance

## **10:07 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I want public option to compete with private insurers and keep them honest.

## **10:08 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I am an advocate for Single Payer. I think it should have been labeled "Medicare."

## **10:08 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

OK. But does it need to be an all or nothing proposition? Is it better to move forward with a reform package without a public option than have nothing at all?

## **10:08 Comment From Nick Anton**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

First of all, the status quo is definitely more expensive: a public option is absolutely necessary - single payer would be the best - cradle to grave coverage is the only encouragement for insurers to invest preferably in preventative care. The argument that preventative care is more expensive and doesn't save money is based on the fact that true preventative care from pregnancy to death has never been tried in this country.

## **10:08 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

What is amazing to me is that people who are so upset have no idea Medicare is a government program

## **10:08 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Medicare has been a financial disaster. How can we possibly extend that kind of government program to the entire country? The government option has already proven that it cannot function in an economical way.

## **10:09 Comment From Budd**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

How will a coop system insure the millions who do not have insurance now?

## **10:09 Comment From jim jenkins**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Fundamental health care reform is a must but only when we have a viable and active economy that is capable of sustaining and supporting the \$1 trillion investment that is required. I believe the first thing that has to occur is to restore the economy, lower unemployment and put the basics in place to provide the economic backing to support the health plan overhaul

## **10:09 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We (as a nation) decided a long time ago that we needed to have some kind of universal health care coverage. • We first created Medicare<sup>1</sup>, to help out the older citizens, and then extended it to other groups, but inadequately fund it, so it is now necessary for seniors to purchase 'Medi-Gap' insurance for themselves. As seen in the reference below, you are not automatically eligible just because you are 65, and it is not necessarily free either. Also note that coverage may be determined by the specific medical condition, note particularly; “If you aren’t yet 65, you might also qualify for coverage if you have a disability or with End-Stage Renal disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or transplant).” This is a nice provision, but what about heart conditions? Lung? Why distinguish predicated upon a specific ailment? • Then we created Medicaid<sup>2</sup> (MediCal in California), to help out the poor, but it is grossly underfunded and consequently reimbursements are so poor it has become quite difficult to find a physician who will accept it at all. • Medicaid has been extended by another program called the State Children's Health Insurance Program<sup>3</sup> • Then we created the National Health Service Corps<sup>4</sup> but, due to budgetary constraints, it is something that only applies to special situations. • Then of course we have the Veterans Administration<sup>5</sup>, which provides some types of health care for some veterans, some of the time. First You need to pass a 'mea

## **10:09 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

It's very disappointing that we aren't considering an option like Canada's single payer system. The current system is corrupt with the greed of the profit-making health insurance companies.

## **10:10 Comment From Gretchen Barry**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Health insurance is much more complex than auto insurance. As we've seen in Massachusetts, mandatory insurance is not working. It only benefits the insurance companies.

## **10:10 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Richard refers to Medicare as a financial disaster -- i.e. there aren't enough people paying in to cover the long-term costs. But the same is true in the public sector: GM is supporting more retirees than current employees. Phone companies are headed the same way. The steel industry went through it, too. I think the question for a public option is whether there's actuarial evidence of a large enough group to support it.

## **10:10 Comment From EB**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
Mandatory health insurance would depend on cost.

## **10:10 Comment From Pete Golis**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
Paul and Jim, thanks for sponsoring this town hall. About the status quo. there are two things we know for sure: One, as Baby Boomers grow older, Medicare will go broke unless we find a way to control costs. Two, when an uninsured person shows up at a hospital emergency room, the cost of treatment blows the doors off the cost of the same care at a local clinic.

## **10:11 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Budd, to answer your question. A co-op really needs to be large enough to be competitive with national insurance carriers or it won't work. Similiar co-ops have worked in some states, but we have no national model. Either way, it's a gamble.

## **10:11 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
Welcome, Pete!

## **10:11 Comment From Chinese Noodle**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
How do you mandate that folks purchase health insurance? I recently had an auto accident, and the driver was not insured (even though it is required)?

## **10:11 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
OK EB, what's too much? More than basic car insurance?

## **10:11 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
According to Physicians for a National Health Program, a Medicare for all system would create 2.6 million jobs, increase business and public revenue by 17 billion, add 100 million to payrolls, and 44 billion to tax revenues. I think the problem we are having in part is due to us not knowing exactly what we are debating--the bills that are emerging from the House and Senate are not defined.

## **10:11 Comment From Dave**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The real problem for healthcare in Sonoma County is the dominance of Kaiser. The recession is forcing more employers and people to drop their insurance or switch to the cheapest plan which is Kaiser- it is cheaper because Kaiser doesn't care for the uninsured and poor in our community.

## **10:12 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The PeeDee and others continue to repeat the false claim that there are "46 million uninsured Americans." You might be basing that claim on the 2007 Census Bureau's report, which asked the question, "At any time last year, were you without health insurance?" Not chronically uninsured, but any time.

## **10:13 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

No, it would be a waste of time without the public option.

## **10:13 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Joe, does the fact that they don't choose to be insured make them insured? What's your thought on mandating health insurance to resolve the issue?

## **10:13 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We (as a nation) decided a long time ago that we needed to have some kind of universal health care coverage. • We first created Medicare<sup>1</sup>, to help out the older citizens, and then extended it to other groups, but inadequately fund it, so it is now necessary for seniors to purchase 'Medi-Gap' insurance for themselves. As seen in the reference below, you are not automatically eligible just because you are 65, and it is not necessarily free either. Also note that coverage may be determined by the specific medical condition, note particularly; "If you aren't yet 65, you might also qualify for coverage if you have a disability or with End-Stage Renal disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or transplant)." This is a nice provision, but what about heart conditions? Lung? Why distinguish predicated upon a specific ailment? • Then we created MediCaid<sup>2</sup> (MediCal in California), to help out the poor, but it is grossly underfunded and consequently reimbursements are so poor it has become quite difficult to find a physician who will accept it at all. • Medicaid has been extended by another program called the State Children's Health Insurance Program<sup>3</sup> • Then we created the National Health Service Corps<sup>4</sup> but, due to budgetary constraints, it is something that only applies to special situations. • Then of course we

have the Veterans Administration<sup>5</sup>, which provides some types of health care for some veterans, some of the time. First You need to pass a 'mea

### **10:13 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We should fix what is boken and leave the rest alone.

### **10:13 Comment From Russ Odland**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

At least with single payer, the effeciency is great. 90-95 cents to health care providers.

### **10:13 Comment From Gretchen Barry**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Paul, I hear what you're saying about all or nothing, but the compromise was in taking single-payer off the table. If they take the public option off the table, it's not really reform at all.

### **10:14 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

My first choice is a single payer system like Medicare.

### **10:14 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Hey Pete,

Thanks for joining us. That's Pete Golis, columnist for The Press Democrat. Pete, you're right. One of the great myths in this debate is that uninsured people don't get coverage. In fact, studies show they get about 50-70 percent of the helath care that those with insurance do. They just get it through emergency rooms which can't legally deny coverage to anyone. Very expensive. And we all pay for that.

### **10:15 Comment From Sean MacNeil**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

For all of the critics who call Medicare "financial disaster", need to imagine the financial disasters should it not exist.

### **10:15 Comment From jerry**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

why isn't anyone talking about kaiser? they are the big problem and they need to do more to take on more of the county's poor-if they did' all hospitals in sonoma county would be doing better financially.

## **10:15 Comment From Millie**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Kaiser seems to be profitable. Has anyone considered modeling a national plan off them?

## **10:16 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Hey Gretchen, I agree with you. There's already been compromise. But the alternative is that this discussion could implode as it did in 1993.

## **10:16 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Yeah but Canada's system has people coming here for heart surgery because they'd die there

## **10:16 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

- Why do we need a fifth system? Why not simply adequately fund the systems we already have in place?
- Assuming we do need a different system, why not combine the existing four, and spend money for one agency instead of five?
- If health care is universal, why make the distinction between citizens regarding who is entitled to what program?
- As can be seen in the following attachments, the existing programs require means testing, reimburse differently depending upon patient classification and the programs vary from year to year, depending upon the budget and political winds.
- The underfunding of programs such as Medicaid virtually force health care providers to shift costs to other patients, as the reimbursement rate is frequently below the cost of providing the service. Assume, for the sake of argument, that starting tomorrow Medicaid was the single provider; Could your health care provider remain in business? I seriously doubt it, what then?
- Keep in mind, the notion of "Single Payer" has no guarantee it will be fair and reasonable. In fact monopolies (which this would be) have a long history of being uncompetitive.
- People are not merely speculating about the characteristics of any new plan, we have a long history to look back on, and it is reasonable to assume that any new program will eventually succumb to the same demands, regardless of any political rhetoric to the contrary.

## **10:16 Comment From Richard Sorensen Romero**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I agree completely with Gullixson; the public option is not going to pass, so we should secure certain reform (pre-existing, pricing, et cetera) from the insurance carriers - learn what the Clintons blew!

## **10:16 Comment From John A. McDonald**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

My wife & I both over 65 feel that insurance companies should leave health care coverage to the govt. as there is plenty of profit and less hassle for them in insuring everything else--property, vehicles, life, liability et cetera

## **10:17 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Rationing is a real issue for seniors. When most bills include a \$220 billion cut in Medicaid for Extended care (convalescent hospitals, board and care, etc) Home healthcare and rehabilitative care how can any senior view it as anything except health care rationing.

## **10:18 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I should mention that The Press Democrat Editorial Board has not yet taken a position on any of the health care packages being discussed in Congress. All we've indicated so far is that no reform is going to work in the long run without controlling costs. I would also say that reform is not going to work until and unless Obama identifies a clear funding source.

## **10:20 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

What about personal accountability or responsibility for sustaining health before dependence on a system?

## **10:20 Comment From Andy Logar**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

It's instructive to examine the statistics concerning the millions of uninsured. According to the 2006 Census, 47 million people were reported without health insurance, of which 9.5 million were not citizens. Parenthetically, I suggest that figure is far too low, because even old statistics estimate 12- 20 million illegal - non-citizens - reside here. Furthermore, 18 million of the 47 million were between the ages of 18 to 34, most of whom were presumably in good health and not in urgent need of health care coverage – or who chose not to purchase it. Also, 14 million of the 47 million are already eligible for government insurance through Medicaid but have not signed up for whatever the reason. Now, here is the critical figure to focus on: only 30% of the non-elderly who became uninsured in a given year remained uninsured for more than 12 months

– almost 50% regained their health coverage within 4 months. In other words, the 47 million figure is not reflective of reality.

## **10:20 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We already have a tax payer provided health system and it is a very big part of what is costing so much money. It is the medical care dispensed to people who are not even in this country legally who get their health care at the outpatient department. What are we going to do to eliminate that expense?

## **10:20 Comment From jim**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

How about investing in our public hospitals, which are vastly underfunded, which now provided health care to most of those who do not have coverage. This will take care of the 'uninsured' until we can get the economy growing once again

## **10:21 Comment From Kiwi**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Kaiser should pay their fair share of taking care of the poor. How can they be a not for profit system and not take care of the poor?

## **10:21 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Regarding a single payer system, how would you like it if the single payer was MediCal? That program is substantially underfunded, with the result that people on MediCal have a difficult time finding a doctor who will help them.

## **10:21 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Continuing my post on the 46 million uninsured (I didn't realize that the carriage return sent the comment): In the Census Bureau's report, the data show that there are 16 million uninsured Americans under the age of 24. These people are eligible for the S\_CHIP program, but, since they don't currently have a need, they are not enrolled. Similarly, 700,000 people are over the age of 65. these people are eligible for medicare but, since they don't currently have a need, they are not enrolled. 9.5 million people are illegal immigrants who are not eligible for any public health care. 18 million people make more than \$50k per year. so, what is the real number of chronically uninsured Americans and why isn't the healthcare proposal targeted to serving those people?

## **10:21 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Several references this morning to single-payer, which has a lot of support in this community. But we're not starting from scratch. What happens to all the people working for the insurance companies?

## **10:22 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

(Be careful hitting 'return' on your comments as that may also activate the 'send' button depending on your browser.)

## **10:22 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Insurance was created too spread the risk among a large group. The largest group we have is the whole country. I think private for profit insurance companies do not do as good a job as the Government could do.

## **10:22 Comment From Val**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Lets have Medicare be our public option. Control the drug costs like the VA does.

## **10:24 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

News item: The AARP reports that it has lost more than 60,000 members because of what the members describe as the group's "pro-Obama" health care position.

## **10:24 Comment From Darryl Fenley**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Kaiser is the only one making money in health care. Where are they in taking care of their fair share of our health care issues?

## **10:24 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Additionally, health insurance should be de-coupled from employment. This is unfair to small businesses.

## **10:24 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Hmmm. What other health insurance plans take care of uninsured in Sonoma County?

## **10:25 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Jim, our President says that only the rich will pay for it. How can that possibly be true?

## **10:25 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Jim, you're right. It's not much help to go back and start with what we wished we could have such as a single-payer system. We ran an opinion piece last week noting how Social Security started out small and didn't include everyone at first. For example, ag wokers weren't covered. There are plenty of other examples of programs that developed over time. Should health care reform start the same way?

## **10:26 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The National governoprs assisiation opposed this cut saying it will deprive seniors of necessary coverage force family to care for the elderly at home without neccary support and potentially bancrupt the State when the current stimilius funding ends.

## **10:26 Comment From janer**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Most people have Kaiser because there are not enough family doctors in the community to take you if you are on Medicare. They can refuse to accept more Medicare patients. So we definitely need some other solution than what we currently have. So much depends on where you live.

## **10:26 Comment From Gretchen Barry**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Joe, are you saying there really isn't an issue with uninsured or underinsured Americans?

## **10:27 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

What guarantee do you have that a single payer plan will be adequately funded? How would you like it if your only option was MediCal?

## **10:27 Comment From Helen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

It appears that if we DO NOT institute a national health care (public option or Medicare for all) that our economy will not survive. We seem to be able to find enough \$\$ for any war, any where. We can therefore, I'm sure find the funds (repeal the Bush tax cuts anyone?) to fund Medicare for all.

## **10:28 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Richard, As I said in my first comment -- and as the paper noted in an editorial a couple weeks ago -- controlling health care inflation is a prerequisite. If costs rise too fast, a tax on high incomes isn't going to be enough to subsidize those who can't afford coverage.

I don't think anyone expects -- or should expect -- that this will be free. People will be paying premiums through payroll deductions, taxes or some mechanism.

## **10:28 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

One problem with a public option is that it could lead to a two-tiered medical system. Look at MediCal. It used to be a robust program, but over time has been cut to nothing. The only way to ensure good health care for all is to copy Canada with a single-payer system.

## **10:28 Comment From Nick Anton**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I think we need to address the delivery system. Fee-for-service medicine and fee-for-service hospitals will continue to make medical costs rise. Integrated healthcare systems (such as Kaiser, Mayo Clinic, Grouphealth) have shown that they can provide quality healthcare at much lower cost. Medicare, Medicaid and expanded public option can provide the INCENTIVES for the delivery system to make these changes.

## **10:28 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We've got ourselves in a very big mess with the current system we are in. We need to have a gradual plan to get out of it. Phasing different groups in or having pilot projects in various states to see which is most cost effective. What works for one state may not work for another. Gradual

is the key here, or we won't get it right. The bottom line is we need a public plan that phases into single payer. The insurance companies need serious controls

## **10:28 Comment From patty van**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Hey Paul- you are right the uninsured people get care but episodic and emergency care is NEVER ideal, cost aside. Good health cannot be maintained in the ER

## **10:28 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Mandating health insurance is not the answer. Look at the success we've had in mandating automobile insurance. Look at the success Massachusetts has had in mandating health insurance. Maybe we need more reporting on the successes of the program in Massachusetts.

## **10:28 Comment From Amy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

There are many young people who don't believe they need health insurance and choose not to pay for it. If we covered the young and healthy this could help reduce insurance costs for all.

## **10:28 Comment From EB**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Re mandatory health coverage being too much as compared to auto insurance: auto insurance coverage can be just liability or comprehensive, etc. would that apply to mandatory health insurance, too? Too much would mean that a person would have to choose between eating or seeing a doctor.

## **10:29 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Here's another myth though. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the House version of the bill would not insure everyone. It would cut the uninsured from 47 million (a number that is probably well over 50 million at this point) to 17 million.

## **10:29 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

If your comments don't show up immediately, be patient. We're getting lots of great comments from concerned readers and we're publishing them as fast as possible. Keep the feedback coming, If you haven't voted in our ongoing polls, click the 'vote now' button next to the poll question right below this box. Thanks.

## **10:29 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The truth is .. we all pay for the uninsured. All insured people pay for those who can't pay- there is just a cost shifting.

## **10:29 Comment From Darryl Fenley**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I agree, primary care is the issue. If everyone had a doctor they could go to our emergency rooms wouldn't be so crowded and our hospitals wouldn't be dealing with all the patients that get so sick because they don't have a doctor.

## **10:30 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We currently have several health care programs, such as Medicare, MediCal, Veterans Administration etc. Why do we need another system, why not combine them, then adequately fund it?

## **10:30 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Good question, EB. Perhaps the requirement could be catastrophic care. If preventive care really saves money, insurers probably would include it. I'm not sure what Massachusetts requires for its mandatory policies. I'll check on that and post in a minute ...

## **10:30 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I became disabled last year. Even being disabled I had to buy my own own health insurance on disability payments. (I don't qualify for Medicare until two years have passed, even though my disability is

## **10:31 Comment From Beth**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I wish that I could sit here and try to keep up with this great discussion... but I have to go. My thoughts: I volunteer at Sutter and I see the uninsured come thru. We need preventive care for all, not linked to employment, with a public option to keep costs reasonable. This is health care, not a money maker for some insurance executive. I support Sutter's new hospital proposal. Let's plan for the future-- with environmentally friendly hospitals, access to appropriate care (not just ER), and the ability for everyone to get some kind of coverage.

### **10:31 Comment From Richard Sorensen Romero**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Paul, it imploded in 1993 because the Clinton's had a single-minded purpose - Single Taxpayer. We could have secured major concessions from the insurance industry, as Obama can now without a public option (which will not pass)

### **10:31 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Trashing Canada's health care system is not constructive.

### **10:31 Comment From Pete Golis**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

About the "public option," people will disagree. Liberals will say that a bill without a public option isn't reform. They may have to decide whether they want a compromise or no bill. What's happening now may prove to be a microcosm of the Obama presidency - that is, liberal Democrats insisting that the president not compromise for the sake of getting a bill. Welcome to Politics 101: When is compromise legislation better than no legislation?

### **10:31 Comment From Jane**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Reform is necessary, but is there sufficient reform if the public option is not a part of the plan?

### **10:31 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

You are probably getting a lot more comments than you counted on getting. This is a very volatile issue that many people want to talk about. It's too bad that Congresswoman Woolsey has ducked this issue by refusing to hold town hall meetings. As a major proponent of single-payer healthcare, she is probably afraid of what she might hear from her constituents.

### **10:31 Comment From Jane**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

That health care is a highly profitable business is where the problem lies. We don't have police and fire protection for profit - it is a government operation. At the very least, there should be a public option.

### **10:31 Comment From jim**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I understand that the current proposal will gain \$500 Billion from the current Medicare plan. Do any of you know what will be cut from Medicare to get that money?

### **10:31 Comment From Amy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

What's wrong with rationing? We do so in every area of our lives including public safety. See NYT article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/19/magazine/19healthcare-t.html>

### **10:31 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

A very good example of health care rationing is in the Veterans Administration, where there are 8 different priority levels. Depending upon current budgets, a 'cut-off' is set and people below that point are denied care.

### **10:31 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

If Canada's system is so awful why aren't Canadians demanding our system? For every Canadian person that didn't receive adequate care, I can find 1,000 examples of lack of care within our own system.

### **10:31 Comment From Jane**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Realistically, how can a government plan control costs?

### **10:32 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Why is no one in Congress talking about the low-hanging fruit of tort reform? (the questions is rhetorical since the Democrats are bought and paid for by trial lawyers). If we did away with junk lawsuits, costs would go WAY down. And portability - if we made purchasing of health

insurance tax deductible, as it is for businesses, then individuals would be able to purchase it themselves and would no longer have to fear losing coverage when they lose a job.

### **10:32 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

When one coming to funding issues the Obama administration says \$550 billion in Medicare savings can be achieved thru productivity saving primarily thru institution of electronic medical records. Kaiser on the other hand says it's electronic medical record system in place over 10 years increased health care quality but did not reduce costs. So how then will it be paid for. If these savings are unachievable. The current legislation calls for a new tax on those earning more than \$250,000 including small businesses filing as individuals just what we don't need in the middle of a recession.

### **10:32 Comment From Budd**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Good point, Paul, about funding source, but who identified the funding source to finance the Iraq war?

### **10:32 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

If you want examples of the current fears, simply look at the plans we already have in place. Rationing (VA), underfunding (MediCal) etc.

### **10:32 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Paul, there have been several op-eds in the paper that put the lie to your claim that the editorial staff has not taken a position on healthcare.

### **10:32 Comment From Nick Anton**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Many healthcare economists estimate that as much as \$700 billion of the \$2.3 trillion healthcare expenditure are wasted on unnecessary and borderline-effective procedures and treatments.

### **10:33 Comment From Marilyn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

There is an ethical issue here--the idea of corporate profit for illness. We already have two national health plans here that work with varying degrees of success: the VA and Medicare. The

second allows free choice of doctors, etc., but it is not free. We should choose the best from these programs and extend them., gradually, so everyone can be covered.

### **10:33 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

OK. Even if we concede the need to provide insurance to everyone and the need to deal with all the flaws in the existing system, how do we pay for it?

The Congressional Budget office has estimated the cost of the House version at \$1 trillion over the first decade, adding \$239 billion to the federal deficit.

### **10:33 Comment From patty van**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I COMPLETELY agree with Guest at 10:20....why doesn't this debate include any discussion on each person's responsibility to maintain health and reduce risk??

### **10:34 Comment From Tina**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I read in the newspaper Kaiser has over 60% of the county's patients-or at least the insured ones. With six other hospitals competing for what is left over - that is the problems. The fact is, hospital use insured patients to cover their losses from the poor and uninsured that don't pay. With Kaiser dominating the county - there is no way all the hospitals can make it. Why can't we make Kaiser take care of more of the poor - they are ones making money

### **10:34 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Obviously, if we have public run health care, it must be funded. Republicans like to slash funding and then complain about how programs don't work.

### **10:34 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Paul, yes, some kind of reform is better than no reform - but only if it does not shut the door on real reform which would include getting insurance companies out of the health care business. At a minimum any reform must include hard restrictions on insurance companies as to denying coverage, executive compensation, and profit levels. And no loopholes.

### **10:34 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Why not force the health insurance companies shoulder their responsibility? Pre-existing conditions should NOT preclude you from getting insurance.

### **10:35 Comment From Nick Anton**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

When you insure 47 million people who don't have healthcare insurance, you'll create hundreds-of-thousands jobs.

### **10:35 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

It's not just the uninsured. We're also talking about the underinsured. I have insurance, but most of us are one chronic illness away from losing everything.

### **10:35 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Here is my proposed healthcare/insurance reform bill: 1. All US Citizens must obtain health insurance - standard to be written -see Kaiser as example 2. All US Citizens must provide proof of insurance within their Federal Income Tax return. - see your local DMV for example 3. If a US Citizen falls into a poverty level economic level, the Federal Government will subsidize premiums 4. Any Insurance company - for profit or not must offer an insurance product to a minimum standard 5. A US Citizen can not be denied coverage for pre-existing condition 6. A US Citizen is entitled to renewal in spite of health condition 7. In the event of catastrophic health issue, the Federal Government will subsidize umbrella insurance over and above a limit on the basis of 95% with the Citizen required to pay up to 5% subject to poverty level guidelines in item 3. 8. In order to encourage compliance, all health insurance premiums paid by a US Citizen will be considered a a tax deduction. 9. Doctors and Hospitals will be encouraged, but not required to form into provider groups using the Kaiser example. 10. The insurance contract, between the insurer and the insured shall be the personal property of the insured, guaranteed by the Federal Government. As long as we don't pay the lawyers by the hour, you can get this into a bill for vote in less that 1,100 pages.

### **10:35 Comment From Russ Odland**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The insurance company people will find a job doing something else. In all sunset industries, they find other work.

### **10:35 Comment From Richard Sorensen Romero**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Good question Jim; no one cares about the 100,000 of dedicated insurance employees and representatives - the industry has been completely vilified by Obama - a President that I otherwise wholeheartedly support.

## **10:35 Comment From Tom**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Jim - what do u mean "what happens to people in insurance companies?"

## **10:36 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Hey everyone,

I wanted to share a comment left by one of our regular readers:

Paul, I wanted to say thank you to you and Mr. Sweeney for having what will probably be the only "town hall" for our area! Unfortunately, I will not be able to participate since I have a prior engagement on Tuesday mornings. (If you have any more virtual meetings of this sort, how about changing the time around? . . .)

Are you aware just how Rep. Woolsey set up her telephone town meeting? I called her office to find out why I was not invited to participate, since I am one of her constituents and I am also on her email list. Her assistant told me that the telephone "town hall" had been held by calling random constituents right at the time of the meeting and allowing them to listen in if they wanted to.

M

My jaw dropped when her assistant told me this. What a blatant way of trying to avoid anyone who might have any political opinions. First, many people who were called were probably not at home, or else were busy with things that they could not just drop in order to participate in the meeting. Second, even if interested persons were lucky enough to get the phone call in the first place (we certainly did not receive one here at our house!), they would have been caught flat-footed, with no time to prepare questions. Third, even if interested persons got the call and were quick-witted enough to prepare questions on the fly, it sounds like there were too many people online for many questions to get through. Woolsey's assistant told me that 7,000 people participated. (I don't know if that's how many were called or how many remained on the telephone line after being called.) Well, obviously 7,000 people can't all talk at once! Probably only a relative few questions made it through.

Woolsey is secure in her district and obviously doesn't give a good ... er, darn what people here have to say to her . .

Again, thanks for trying to listen to people, when our own representatives won't bother. I think people appreciate your efforts.

A

nn Jordan  
Santa Rosa

## **10:37 Comment From Russ Odland**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I think Medicare is a good model to start from as a public option.

## **10:37 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Why does Obama talk about insurance companies as they are all greedy profit making evil entities when most are already not for profit or self insured. Kaiser and Blue Shield for example are not for profit. CalPERS is partially self insured. The Central Valley Trust (a joint Union-Management venture which covers many of the State's teachers is non profit. Many large corporation plans are self insured. Isn't Obama miscategorizing the situation?

### **10:37 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Makes me want to join AARP.

### **10:37 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Those working for insurance companies can gain employment with the new system. It seems some are more interested in the health of the insurance companies than the health of the American people.

### **10:37 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I think there is so much misinformation out there that the seniors are confused.

### **10:38 Comment From Jane**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Your AARP comments are incomplete - your article in today's paper said they have also gained members.

### **10:39 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Jane: Excellent point. Here's the context:

The approximately 60,000 number represents members who specifically cited AARP's stance on the health overhaul debate in canceling their membership between July 1 and mid-August, Nannis said. He said that on average AARP loses some 300,000 members a month, but he couldn't say how many more members had quit for other reasons in that time period.

He said AARP gained some 400,000 new members during the same period and that 1.5 million members renewed their membership.

The membership loss figure was first reported Monday by CBS News.

## **10:39 Comment From Nick Anton**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The VA is a great example of a government-run healthcare program, providing care at 60% of the cost of the average insurance company and with the highest patient satisfaction of any healthcare organization.

## **10:39 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I get concerned when people start putting their faith in the government to bring down costs. Gov't intervention usually does just the opposite:

## **10:39 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I totally agree with Mary Balcerak- we are killing business with this burden

## **10:39 Comment From Peter McCormick**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Jim, We don't have much sympathy for the auto workers. Would there be a lot of sympathy for insurance company employees or more importantly the stock holders?

## **10:39 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Although the government could THEORETICALLY create a better system, historically they haven't. Consider our current systems, and what leads you to think another system will be better?

## **10:39 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

What needs to be done is to deal with the basic problem and change or modify the tort laws. If malpractice insurance was not so expensive due to all the frivolous suits the cost of insurance would be much lower.

## **10:39 Comment From Collin Miller**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

What we really need is a single payer and provider system like the VA, which has been proven to be effective. Ask any veteran (I am one of them). Since that is a long shot, at this point how about we provide a public option which is the same as what the senators and congressmen get?

## **10:39 Comment From Al & Bev Bertaina**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Because the rich used to pay up to 90% in taxes during the Ike years and now pay no more than 36%.

## **10:39 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Can anyone cite a single national government program of any kind at any time that delivered the value per dollar of private industry in the same business? Government programs are doomed by their own bureaucracy. Why don't we ever learn that lesson?

## **10:40 Comment From Helen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We are already paying for health care (I pay \$968/mo for a family of 3 with a \$3000/year deductible plan). I'm a (very) small business owner that is willing to pay more to insure everyone. I am very middle class, have a kid in college, but it is the right thing to do!!

## **10:40 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I meant what happens to people who work at health insurance companies?

We get many letters castigating the top executives, their pay and bonuses. But what about the employees? Insurance is a huge sector of the economy. It would take some expansion of the federal payroll to add everyone to a single-payer program, but it would appear that tens of thousands of people (if not more) would be left jobless.

## **10:40 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Examples of government increasing health care costs 1) Medicare typically underpays, meaning privately insured people make up the difference; 2) states have minimum coverage requirements, making a cheaper, "no-frills" plan not available; 3) rules that require folks to buy insurance within their states stifle competition;

## **10:40 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

With Single Payer businesses and government entities would be free of health care expenses. This should be a no-brainer.

## **10:40 Comment From Marilyn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

According to a study I read, just very few Canadians come to the US for health care, but millions of Americans leave to purchase care in other countries. Lots of Southern Californians go to Mexico for dental and other procedures, and there is a growing tourist-hospital business in Thailand and other countries. This is taking money out of our economy. Why can't the richest country in the world provide care for its own citizens?

## **10:41 Comment From Tom Martin**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

My thanks to the PD for yesterday's editorial and today's forum for restoring some sanity to the local debate on this issue. As noted in your opening comment, fear is driving an unhealthy percentage of this dialog. I suggest that the PD could provide a larger public service with a non-biased feature addressing FAQs and debunking myths (i.e., the 'death panels').

## **10:41 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Medicare is currently underfunded, just like Social Security. Why are we talking about adding millions to Medicare without getting serious about funding it. It's time to get real - we are not going to be able to pay for health care for all, at the level of service that people expect, with just taxes on "the rich." It will inevitably lead to reductions in costs, which equate to rationing of care. Both Canada and the UK have proved to us that result.

## **10:41 Comment From Peter McCormick**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Has there been a discussion on end of life planning or "death panels"? Is that no longer part of the legislation?

## **10:41 Comment From Cecy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Why should we be forced to give up the ability to choose? The government wants to take everything away, choice is all we have left.

## **10:41 Comment From LT**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Given the US Government's track record of operating the Postal Service and Medicare, both financially unprofitable, how can we be confident they have the expertise and ability to operate

another venture/program? The government's track record points toward disaster. Would any of you buy stock in the government's venture?

## **10:41 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Gretchen: No, what I am saying is that any health care reform should be narrowly tailored to address the needs of the chronically uninsured, not upend the entire healthcare system.

## **10:41 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

If, as Obama has claimed, the dastardly insurance companies are at the root of all of this, why does he continue to claim that, "If you like your current health care, you can keep it"?

## **10:41 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Thank you Jim. Now that it has been established that EVERYONE is going to pay do we all think that this is such a good idea?

## **10:41 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Frankly, I don't blame seniors for being confused and concerned about changes in their coverage. There are a lot of unknowns out there. But here are two facts: One, there's no proposal to cut their Medicare benefits. (And, yes, Medicare is a good example of a well-run government program.) And, no, there was never going to be a "death panel" evaluating whether people were too old or too infirm to receive treatment. That was the worst kind of fear-mongering

## **10:42 Comment From Fred**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

"If we were starting from scratch..." we could talk about a plan where private insurance companies work together with a "robust public option" to cover everyone. But we're not starting from scratch, we live with powerful corporate interests that will ensure any bill like that will be weakened to the point where its only result will be to make sure that the corporate interests make more money and have more power than they now do. We need Medicare for everyone, with no co-payments and no extra "advantage" plans. And since we're not "starting from scratch", we can build on the experience of Medicare and the VA to bring the same high quality care to everyone. How many of you would feel it was "traumatic" to wake up tomorrow to find that you would continue to receive exactly the care you received yesterday but that the bill would be sent to the Government?

## **10:42 Comment From Rhonda Odegard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

This is crazy. We can't fix a dysfunctional system overnight. We need to start slowly with doing pilot projects on a public option that would expand Medicare, SCHIP, VA systems with an eventual end to the insurance monopoly

## **10:42 Comment From Cecy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

They talk about 14,000 losing their insurance every day, that is because they are being laid off. What do they plan on doing about that?

## **10:42 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

When considering the problems with the current government systems, what makes anyone thing a new system will be better?

## **10:42 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Dug costa according to the New England Journal of Medicine arew the major contributors to raising health insurance costs yet the Obama administration renieged on campaign promises to permit reimportation of drugs from Canada and negotate Medicare drug prices. Ignored was according to the NEGM the largest potention saving which is the elimination of prescription drug advertising. The AMA supports elimination of Prescription Drug advertising which the NEJM says would cut prices of the 100 most commonly used prescription drugs in half. Also ignored are needed changes in patent laws that detur the uses of generic drugs and afford new patent protection when very minor dosage changes are made like once a day versus twice a day. This could be a major cost savings.

## **10:42 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

This is going by too fast. I have to get busy here. I look forward to a printable record of the chat, and a full report in the paper.

## **10:43 Pete Golis**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The New York Times today cites a Gallup Poll that shows fewer than half the Medicare age population want reform, while younger people are eager for reform. There is no small irony, of

course, in the the number of people on Medicare, a government program, warning of the dangers of government health care. It's also true that politicians know that older people vote in greater numbers than do younger Americans.

## **10:43 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Note: After the chat is over, there will be a full transcript online at [pressdemocrat.com](http://pressdemocrat.com). You'll be able to find it at the Opinions section of the Web site.

## **10:43 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Peter, you may not have much sympathy for the auto workers. But I had to see a major manufacturing industry that put a lot of people in the middle class collapse, driven in part by the cost of providing health care. As for stockholders, millions of people have stocks in their retirement accounts, which is no small thing.

But my original point wasn't so much about sympathy or not but actuarial data. The automakers opposed Harry Truman's health plan, installed their own as an alternative and now are paying the consequences. Would the same thing happen with a public option system? Or can we count on enough participation to keep it solvent and competitive? I don't know the answer.

## **10:43 Comment From Joan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Health care reform is a MUST and some form of universal coverage--government assisted of regulated--is essential if the now health insurance companies are to be brought into some form of useful provider-stance.

## **10:43 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

My parents live in Massachusetts. The program is an expensive disaster.

## **10:44 Comment From Al & Bev Bertaina**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

It's really been "all or nothing" from the Republicans. Obama has made compromise after compromise and still gets nothing from the people who lost the election big time.

## **10:44 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Pete, with all due respect, as a liberal I compromised by giving up single payer for the public option. Now I have to give up that too?

## **10:44 Comment From Steele**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I think we have all been misled. The issue is not health care, the care is the best in the world. The real issue is a desire to cover those that can't or in most cases choose not to purchase insurance. This is an insurance problem not a care problem

## **10:44 Comment From Collin Miller**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I'd like to know if Mike Dolan is a veteran. I am a veteran and have been very happy with the system. I never have a problem getting service.

## **10:44 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Joe, in case you haven't noticed, a lot of us here are advocating for the public option. Lynn Woolsey isn't hiding.

## **10:44 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

For those who just joined us, I realize this discussion is a little unfocused. But that is the world of online discussions of this type. Just jump in and respond to the comment of your choice. We will be going back and reading all of this discussion thread later on to make sure we didn't miss anything.

## **10:44 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We managed to find a trillion dollars to fund a war. If we cannot fund health care reform, that says a lot about our priorities.

## **10:45 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Regarding Kaiser, I am a senior on Medicare. I started with Kaiser as one option in my former employer's health benefits plan and cut my premiums in half from what they had been under the Blue Cross/Blue Shield option. I am very happy with Kaiser.

## **10:45 Comment From jim**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

In reading your own poll question, "Will passage of a health care reform plan lead to better quality" I see that only 42% of those responding believe that the \$1 Trillion dollar plan now being discussed will result in better quality. Why would anyone support such a plan?

## **10:45 Comment From Al & Bev Bertaina**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We've had tort reform in California for years but our health costs haven't gone down.

## **10:45 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Co-ops might be a good idea -- they work well for people in Group Health/Seattle and other cities with high-quality care. News reporters don't seem to understand this; and insist on calling co-ops "confusing" and "muddying." In the late 1930s, every home in the country got electricity through co-ops, and today Ace hardware is a co-op, as is Group Health and other high-quality health caregivers elsewhere in the country. Unlike Kaiser, those folks get to vote for their board of directors and have some control over obscene executive salaries. The Mayo Clinic model, based on salaried doctors and patient's "ability to pay" shows that extravagantly wealthy people are willing to pay for others less able to pay the full freight -- when the care is based on scientific research and not on ability to pay. I urge consideration of the co-operative model for delivery health care -- paid for federally, but basically organized locally (perhaps through community clinics).

## **10:45 Comment From Budd**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Joe, it seems as though those opposed to government reform of health care do not recognize this as a legitimate problematic issue. Is this your opinion as well? Should we maintain the status quo? Or, is there an alternative approach that you can share with us?

## **10:45 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Dr. Anton - I'm sure you agree with every physician I've talked to that malpractice tort reform would go a long, long way to solving our rising cost issue. Why do you think the AMA is not demanding that tort reform be a part of any plan they sign on to?

## **10:45 Comment From Russ Odland**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

How do other industrial countries, Europe and Canada, fund public health care. It can be done.

## **10:46 Comment From Marilyn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

How can we NOT fund public health? It is more important to our national security than maintaining military bases all over the world. It is time we looked at the whole picture and re-prioritized.

## **10:46 Comment From Steele**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The key issue is insurance not care. Insurance reform and government subsidy to those who truly can't afford it will solve the problems.

## **10:46 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

When one asks who are the uninsured one of the answers that comes back is that a third of the uninsured are those who chose to do so but could otherwise buy insurance. I for one support, as former Governor and President did, the concept of individual responsibility to buy health insurance just as we have to have auto insurance.

## **10:46 Comment From Jim Moore**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The problem with a compromise that does not include the public option is that it will almost certainly fail to reduce or hold down costs significantly. Those who oppose reform will use this result as proof that "reform" can't work.

## **10:46 Comment From Christian V**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I phoned Lynn C. Woolsey five times, including the day of her telephone town hall, and I was told five times that there would be no town hall meetings.

## **10:47 Comment From Steve Sherry**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

This HC policy does not work anywhere in the world. I hear that those overseas go through a lottery system to see a doctor. Illegal immigration has caused much of this and we should simply follow the law on that to start. Also let the private sector alone to start companies. That will produce jobs and companies will provide the HC. Also where are the case histories of government

### **10:47 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Good point, Gary,

But will tort reform really save that much? California has had it for 30 years. Have we really seen that much of a difference here?

### **10:47 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The dedicated insurance employees (I used to be one) should consider that they might be like the makers of buggy-whips, when that company (Kodak) decided to innovate and produce something that better served the public. Life long jobs in the United States are a myth and only foolish people would expect their jobs never to change. Even doctors are learning that -- fast.

### **10:47 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

If Lynn Woolsey or Mike Thompson held a town hall meeting in Sonoma County, would you attend? Did anyone here participate in Thompson's telephone town hall? Or any of Woolsey's past sessions? Are they an effective way to discuss an issue?

### **10:47 Pete Golis**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Gretchen, we don't know whether "public option" will emerge from Congress this time. But it's possible you may have to decide whether some reform is better than no reform. Or maybe you will decide that if it doesn't have a public option, it isn't reform at all.

### **10:47 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Another part of the uninsured group are those who are eligible for Medicaid (Medical in California) but don't apply many of them homeless. Why does Obama think any of the reform changes will change this situation?

### **10:47 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Centralizing the health care system will only put pressure on the ends of the system ( rate payers and the providers/patients)

## **10:48 Comment From Christian V**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I would also like to know how Medicare can be used as a model when Medicare is going broke. You can't cover that many people, including preexisting conditions and see a price drop. Who is kidding who in that context.

## **10:48 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Jim, for the record, I'm told that Lynn Woolsey did have a town hall meeting in Sea Ranch on Friday. Apparently it went on for two hours. I don't know if it was just on health care reform, but it sounds like it was a good conversation.

## **10:49 Comment From Steele**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Two words.....Post Office!

## **10:49 Comment From Jane S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I don't blame our representatives for not holding a circus, er what some call a "town hall." Mike Thompson's office sent out a clear definitive e-mail covering his positions on health care reform. You can also call his office - I did. What is the point of a so-called town hall event staged for pictures on You Tube.

## **10:50 Comment From Doug Cummings**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

No need to wring your hands over what happens to those Insurance industry workers losing their jobs. The Federal Government will need people with their specific skills in administering health care claims, etc.

## **10:50 Comment From Steve Sherry**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Where are the case histories where government policies led us out of recession or led us into prosperity. Rugged individualism and deep spiritual moral convictions were the ingredients that started and built this nation. Those principals that should be the stimulus to guide us out of our economic woes and into how we view HC.

## **10:50 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Christian, my understanding of Medicare's problem is that it matches the problem of many private employers: the number of beneficiaires is beginning to outstrip the number of people paying in. It sounds like this will be a problem for public and private sector unless we come up with a system that better matches the number of people paying with the number of people receiving benefits.

## **10:50 Comment From Marilyn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

By the way, I was one of the lucky people who got the phone call to participate in the town meeting with Lynn Woolsey. I got the message on my machine when I returned home, but the second part of the message did not record, so I had no idea when or how. That is not adequate. We need live town hall meetings all across the district.

## **10:50 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We do not have a representative form of government when it has digressed to the point where Woolsey no longer cares what her constituents think. There is only one way to fix that problem and that is at the ballot box. Only when they face the fear of not getting reelected will we get the representation that we deserve.

## **10:50 Comment From Christian V**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Gary Lentz is correct. There is not a single program ever created by government that kept costs down, ever. Why should anyone trust the Government when they hide the costs of Medicare and Social Security. They will abuse this revenue stream as every Congress has, Republican and Democrat.

## **10:50 Comment From Christian V**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Forget what the New York Times says. They are a biased source of data that has been compromised severel times of late.

## **10:50 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

A big part of the uninsured (over 20%) are undocumented immigrants more commonly called illegals. None of the legislative

## **10:51 Comment From Sally Heinz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

One problem is - how do we really know if the VA program works?

## **10:51 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

End of life planning is not a death panel!

## **10:51 Comment From LT**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Tort reform is a must. It help in lowering the cost of health care.

## **10:51 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Everyone is already [paying.if](#) you are insured- you pay for the uninsured- that is why everything is so expensive.

## **10:51 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

By the way, none of this matters if we don't get a handle on costsof health coverage. Projections are that even with reform, costs will escalate faster than a source of government financing (read: tax on wealthy) The gap between costs and revenue is said to be \$65 billion by 2019.

## **10:52 Comment From Helen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Thank you Paul. There are "death-panels" out there already. Insurance companies deny coverage to people (some of whom die because they were denied coverage) daily. Just right-wing fear mongering at it's best.

## **10:52 Comment From Steele**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

This issue has been handled POORLY by our elected officials. If they cant handle the debate how could they ever run a program?

## **10:52 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

as a member of the medical system, I can say that this health care system is already controled by the federal government - It is regulated heavily - and all private insurances are governed by the medicare reimbursement rate. Doctors and other healthcare providers are pinched - now to the point of being unabe to care for their families and unable to see their patients effectively

## **10:52 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Employee-based health insurance essentially implies a person has no value to society except as an employee. Just as we receive tax-payer funded schooling, how about taxpayer-funded health care?

## **10:52 Comment From Fred**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Here's some of what's wrong with the proposed plans by Congress that I have read about so far. They require each person to buy insurance, which will supposedly be checked each time that person needs medical care. There will also be co-payments and other extra costs. The latter will work to make care more expensive for the poor, and the former will be felt as a burden and an intrusion by everyone. And the paperwork problems, the cost of seeing whether each person "deserves" to be seen would continue. I think people who oppose these kinds of bills are correct to do so, for those reasons alone. We need Medicare For All: no payments except taxes, no one denied service, low overhead, low bureaucracy, low government intrusiveness. If we can't get it with the present configuration of Congress, we need to keep the pressure on and get the Congress (and President) we need to pass a system that will work, not some stop-gap that will cripple real reform for generations.

## **10:52 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

WILL PASSAGE OF HEALTH CARE REFOR BE PASS BY THE END OF ..... that is a question for political strategists of which there are altogether too many on TV these days .. Could we please stick to the topic of what KIND of change needs to take place by the end of this year, next year, or whenever?

## **10:52 Comment From kathleen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Congress needs to slow down. This problem cannot be fixed over night. They act like cats stuck in a bag. Try out different systems. Learn from the Kaisers etc. Improve on their ideas. Make us all a more educated about and responsible for our own health.

## **10:53 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Paul, you and others have talked about having the government to come in and compete to bring down costs. Instead government would put private insurers out of business (because they would pay whatever they choose) and we would all be left with the equivalent of the equivalent of the U.S. Postal Service managing our health - not a pretty picture. Government should get out of the way and allow insurers to compete, within certain parameters, to attract patients. That's the best way to control costs.

## **10:54 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Sally asks about whether the VA works. We've had a run of letters to the editor from satisfied VA clients. I know several, also. Yes, that's anecdotal. But we've heard no firsthand complaints. The VA also has use its leverage to dramatically reduce the cost of perscriptions for its clients. It could be a good model for other health care providers -- and insurers aren't eager to see that happen.

## **10:54 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I wish people would begin to consider a local system that can be customized for the region - instead of a nationalized system. Almost like Kaiser

## **10:54 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Richard, Can you share more about heathl care in Massachusettes?

## **10:54 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

The elimination of drug advertisments is the first logical solution I have heard for cutting costs. The one thing we don't want is to cut profits to drug companies so much that there is no incentive for them to research and develop new drugs..

## **10:54 Comment From Helen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Rep. Woolsey has done a phone town hall. This is a great forum for everyone to ask questions rather than creating a disturbance so that no one gets to ask or receive information.

### **10:54 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

If people have simple issues - this government health care will do fine. But if your issues are complex then the system will fail

### **10:54 Comment From LT**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Woolsey should have held a town hall meeting to hear from the people who pay her salary. Congress should listen more and speak less.

### **10:55 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Health insurance is too expensive. My husband and I pay hundreds each month for it. Yet, when I had a very minor accident and wound up in the emergency room I still had to pay \$900 out of my pocket! No wonder many people simply can't afford it.

### **10:55 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

One thing is certainly irrefutable. This is a topic with deep and wide ranging opinions on both sides of the issue. It is inexcusable that our representative has not seen fit to listen to her constituency in an open public forum where these disparate points of view could be expressed. It is time for a change in representation.

### **10:55 Comment From Bob Hawthorne**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We don't need to reform Medicare Seniors think it works fine. It just needs to be expanded,

### **10:55 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Fred, government requires us to buy auto insurance. Is that a burden and intrusion?

### **10:55 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Pete McCormick, my father is one of those auto workers. He's 76 and did all the right things. He was loyal to his company and he signed a contract with them when he retired that included health insurance and life insurance. Since then, his health insurance has been eaten away and his life insurance benefit was reduced 80%! Please be careful when judging others if you don't have all the facts.

## **10:55 Comment From Christian V**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I would attend, it would be much better to address the absent representatives that way then by a letter they always claim to disagree with.

## **10:55 Comment From Nick Anton**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

As a physician, I've never had a patient tell me that they were not satisfied with Medicare: no paperwork, choice of physicians, and limited out-of-pocket expenses. There are many places to reduce costs in the Medicare system without rationing essential services. The proposed clinical-effectiveness commission to study new and existing procedures, drugs, and treatments is an excellent entity to start reducing excessive and unnecessary costs. Studies have shown, in areas with excessive Medicare costs, quality is less. TOO MUCH CARE CAN BE DANGEROUS.

## **10:56 Comment From Russ Odland**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Yes I would attend. I think this is a very important issue.

## **10:56 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

For the record, I recently moved my coverage to Kaiser. Why? Because of costs. It was a more affordable option for my family and because all of my children's pediatricians were leaving town - or going to Kaiser.

I would have preferred to stay in my old plan because, in the long run, I don't see the Kaiser as a sustainable model for a community. Yet, I feel I had little choice. And, so far, I've been very pleased with my family's coverage.

## **10:56 Comment From Peter McCormick**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Jim I have sympathy for auto workers and insurance workers and all workers but I have more sympathy for the sick, injured and particularly those that provide the care and are not appropriately paid for their talents and services. Are there any health care providers out there

that are over worked and well underpaid? With better health care coverage there would be a huge need for more providers.

### **10:56 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I believe everyone needs to consider how much they are willing to spend on their own health care, and how much people are willing to spend on others. I would go to a meeting , even if I had to take off work - count me in - as a health care provider

### **10:56 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Yes I am a veteran, Colin. If you look at WHO is eligible for VA, you will see there are 8 levels. Means testing is one of the primary criteria. Does VA let you see a local doctor? Or do you need to trave a long distance to get there?

### **10:56 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Medi-Cal is a totally broken system with California's unfunded status- I hope the national plan doesn't rely on states other programs

### **10:56 Comment From John A. McDonald**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

When I hear Kaiser and Blue Shield described as "not for profit" it is a lie as in "damned lies & statistics" per Mark Twain. They are only not for profit by very narrow legal definitions and were established that way from the beggining. Read your 20th century American History, folks.

### **10:56 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Yes, I would attend a town hall meeting. Provided our shy representatives would have one.

### **10:57 Comment From Christian V**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Oh, Sea Ranch, there is the center of a metropolitan hub eh? A whole lot of constituents in a town devistated by extreme enviromentalism.

### **10:57 Comment From Bruce**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
Woolsey held a town hall in Sea Ranch? Gimme a break.

### **10:57 Comment From Steve Sherry**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
If L Woolsey has a THall she kept it quiet. I didn't about it. I would have gone.

### **10:57 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
Christian: Medicare can be used as a model because it doesn't need "to be going broke." It requires Congress to allow it to negotiate drug prices, as the VA does, and it requires some control of over-use of technology and clinical testing, unnecessary procedures that potentially harm patients and don't lead to better care. It works for most people and there are ways to control costs if we can get the Insurance Companies out of the House and Senate Chambers long enough to do what's right for the American people, rather than always the largest corporations.

### **10:57 Comment From Christian V**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
Well, Jane S, Mike Thompson is supposed to represent the people's positions, not his.

### **10:58 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
Howard Dean tells it like it is. No amount of compromise by Obama will change the solid desire of the Republicans in Congress to see Obama fail. Therefore, Obama should take a page from George Bush's "Im the decider" stance and stand firm. The Democrats did win the election.

### **10:58 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago  
Paul - regarding your comment about there being no "death panels." That was a colorful way for Sarah Palin to describe it, but there is no doubt that there would be care rationing in a single-payer system. Since the government does not pay "market rates" for care, there would be a shortage of qualified physicians willing to practice, and there would be no way of getting people the treatment they want/need right away. There is rationing in Britain, Canada, and now in Massachussetts. It may not be called a "death panel", but care WILL have to be rationed if the U.S. Government is the payer - no doubt.

### **10:58 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

Town Hall meetings aren't as helpful as good coverage about the details of the plan. The public doesn't have all the facts and they keep changing

## **10:58 Comment From John Turngren**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

We hear a lot of rhetoric these days about a "bureaucracy" taking over health care if there is a public option. The major irony is that a large bureaucracy is in control of our health-care system right now--namely, the complex, gigantic bureaucracy of the health insurance companies that has a stranglehold on the relationship between doctor and patient, which is where health care actually takes place. A single-payer system--some form of which exists in every other industrial nation on the planet--REDUCES bureaucracy by simplifying the ADMINISTRATION of health care. We need a single-payer system now!

## **10:58 Comment From Florie Eliot**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I'm heartened by the thoughtful and constructive comments. Why doesn't the media cite Santa Rosa as an example instead of focussing on the angry outburst at other town meetings. I wish our representatives, in the House and Senatel would stick their necks out and let us know where they stand and if they are listening to us.

## **10:58 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

everyone - medicare is the basis for other insurance coverage. Most physicians I know are having difficulty meating pay roll, and surviving on the limited refenue

## **10:59 Comment From Lucy Barnett**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

While married to a physician, I saw the extraordinary fees going to guard against malpractice. Because of that fear, docs go out of their way to order expensive tests in case they get sued. Just because we can test for everything doesn't mean we can protect ourselves against everything. This is only one example of how costs have skyrocketed. Our technology has gotten ahead of our common sense. We can't save everyone from illness or death even if we had all the money in the world. I hate to break it to you, but no matter how much money we spend to save ourselves from ever dying, it's going to happen eventually. Medicare spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to save my mom. It extended her life by 2 very miserable, sick, always in the hospital and never feeling well years. With us baby boomers on the horizon, I'm not sure we can throw money down the drain like that. Talk about waste AND creating misery along the way! Who actually wants their life extended by spending millions so they can sit in a wheelchair in a nursing home for years on end. If that's your lifes goal, go for it, for the rest of us, no thanks, I'd rather let go.

## **10:59 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

There are things most opponets to the Obama Plan support relative to health insurance reforms. These include allowing interstate insurace sales as AARP does to some extent now. Allowing small business to create large inter state self insurance or insurance buying pools. Elimination of discrimination against enrolles for preexisting condition just as CalPERS and AARP already do. Eliniation of geographis descrimination as some insurers do in Counties which high percentages of seniors. Mandatory enrollment of all employees in the employer program (currently opposed by some union) and a mandatory individual responsibility. Elimination of hidden caps on life time cost present in some medicare Advantage plans If Obama truly seeks common ground we might have some need reforms.

## **10:59 Comment From Chinese Noodle**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I don't think countries with socialized medicine allow punative damages/medical lawsuits -- great cost control measure!

## **10:59 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

cost rising is directly related to the amount of regulations imposed by the federal government

## **10:59 Comment From Christian V**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I have respect for the VA program, but it is not a solid program. You have to get lucky in some cases, as I did with my father who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. I was lucky a very high up physician was standing near by when we were going over the diagnosis of my father and he ordered further testing because of my fathers young age. It was luck that he happened by and only luck.

## **10:59 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 2 hours ago

I agree with kathleen

## **11:00 Comment From LT**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Kathleen is absolutely correct. Congress should slow down.

## **11:00 Comment From Steve Sherry**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

They say there is no health care now, but if illegals or anyone needs to go to emergency room, is it not law they must be attended to. So in a way all are provided for.

## **11:00 Comment From Marilyn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Any single-payer Medicare style system will save money if it is not only for the highest risk populations, the elderly and the disabled. The insurance companies are getting a good deal--they don't have to bother insuring those people and deny coverage to anyone with even the most minor problems. By extending coverage to the young and healthy, we will actually save money with a single payer medicare style system. For more information you can go to [calnurses.org](http://calnurses.org) or [pnhp.org](http://pnhp.org).

## **11:00 Comment From Val**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Single payer means that instead of doctor's offices and hospitals dealing with hundreds of different forms and eligibilities they will deal with one bill.

## **11:00 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Sorry I got here late. My main comment has to do with tort reform. Seems to me that a major reason for excess cost is defensive medicine. Would the Dems \*ever\* have the nerve to reign in the trial lawyers???

## **11:00 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

One of the biggest costs for Doctors and Hospitals and something driving up health insurance costs according to the AMA is skyrocketing medical malpractice insurance. Why then does Obama ignor the critical need for Tort Reform if he is truly focused on cutting costs.

## **11:00 Comment From Jen G**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

For those of you like me who are so concerned yet feel overwhelmed by this issue I found a great article summing it all up for us...in 1000 words!! "What follows is an attempt to boil the health-care debate down to 1,000 words -- a summary you can take to the beach or on the plane or, if you already know it all, send to your Aunt Millie. Love the proposals or hate them, people can

try to make sense of them. There is no excuse!" <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/14/AR2009081401669.html>

## **11:00 Comment From Steve**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Good one Richard

## **11:00 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Unfortunately, with our congress compromised by lobbyiests, the only beneficiaries of new legislation are those with deep pockets IE: Insurance companies, Drug companies and health care chains. YOU won't benefit at all, because you cannot afford the lobbyiest to influence (bribe) your congressional representative.

## **11:00 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
I have sent e-mails to Lynn Woolsey and have heard nothing.

## **11:00 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
WENDY: You're right, the health care system already is heavily influenced by the 40% paid for through Medicare and Medicaid -- the feds control cost, but they don't control quality of care or the amount of over-care (unnecessary testing, etc). It can and it should do more of that.

## **11:00 Comment From Sonoma Senior**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Medicare works fine for us - why not just expand it to cover a bigger audience?

## **11:00 Comment From Jane S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
What seems to be omitted in discussions of Medicare is that it is not entirely free. Only the A part - hospital is free. Recipients must pay, at the present \$96.40 monthly for Part B the medical (doctor services.) There is also a cost for Medicare supplement insurance which many of us pay. Although my husband and I are on Medicare, we pay an additional \$800 per month - hardly free.

## **11:00 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Our representatives are elected to "listen to us." That's their job. They represent all of us, not a chosen few..

## **11:01 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

"President Obama has admonished the nation..." admonished?" A warning to correct some fault as if by fiat from some prince or king? This is fawning sycophancy by the PD editors. Our leaders work for us; we do not follow orders.

## **11:01 Comment From John Turngren**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Auto Insurance should be a single-payer systems as well--a pay at the pump system. This would eliminate the problem of uninsured motoriste--everyone would automatically be covered.

## **11:01 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Pete and Gretchen,

What I hate about this is that you are both right. Our system is leaving many people to fight for the crumbs of a broken health care delivery system. But in order for the system to change, there will need to be trust. Trust that lawmakers will produce something healthy and affordable - and trust in a new system where the benefits will outweigh the unintended consequences. Let's just say we don't live in a very trusting age right now.

## **11:01 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

MediCare as a model is a bad argument. First, it has huge un-funded liabilities, so as a model it has lots against it.

## **11:01 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

And, yes, MediCare can "keep costs down" by simply refusing to pay more. But look what happens -- doctors order extra tests, etc., to supplement income. And look at the growing number of doctors refusing to see MediCare patients.

## **11:01 Comment From Rhonda Odegard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Let's talk about the pharmaceutical business. What a racket. Out of control advertising, hiding the real lives that have been affected by drug side effects. Not keeping the public informed adequately of drug complications. All the while putting drugs as a first line of defense for just about any ailment. Talk about cost.

## **11:01 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Jim- You are a great example of what is working and not working in health care. Kaiser works because it only allows members. It doesn't take care of the poor, and lots of Medi-Cal patients. If they did, they be like every other medical group and hospital- on the brink of financial disaster

## **11:01 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Why do House Democrats want veterans to start paying for TriCare after saying for years if you put in 20 years or retired with a disability you would have this coverage free for life. Another effort to ration healthcare.

## **11:02 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

If we can't pay for Medicare or Social Security how can we pay for another for national health care? Until we get this country's spending habits under control we should not be talking about spending more.

## **11:02 Comment From Eleanor Gorman**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

There will be no perfect solution to health care with whatever reform is passed, I'm certain. However, that can't be the reason we don't pass health care. The system is already broken. We MUST start moving towards providing adequate health care coverage to every American. How is it, that anyone stands by why people die because they can't afford or can't access health care, or give up their retirement, etc., so that they or someone else in their family can get adequate care? How is this not about protecting life and dignity? Furthermore, how are we supposed to be economically efficient when so many of us, including myself, have to worry about providing health care for themselves or their families? How is that possibly in our long term interest economically. Let's move forward, towards having health care for all (get rid of pre-existing conditions first & foremost-- so unethical). Let's keep improving the system as we go along.

## **11:02 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Please consider the health care system as a complex assembly line. I have found that the increased cost is from the beurocracy in the middle of the rate payer (on one end) and the patient/provider on the other end. As the regulations are increased on the system, there are more people at the feeding trough - squeezing the ends.

## **11:02 Comment From Jane S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Christian V - I am part of the "people" and Mike Thompson does represent my position.

## **11:02 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

It is clear that the ultimate goal of many of you is "single payer." It is also clear that this is the goal of our president. The fact that he and others deny that the "public option" is simply a trojan horse for single payer (he has said this explicitly in the past but denies it now) makes the majority of Americans doubt the sincerity of this effort overall. Nobody wants a HUGE piece of ill-considered legislation crammed through Congress overnight just to "get something done", especially when the motives of those who are championing it are so murky. Once, Obama offered to have the negotiations of the plan on C-Span to inspire confidence and let all see what is happening on this critical issue...how far we've come from that, and not in a good way.

## **11:03 Comment From Bruce**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Christian V: Sure our elected officials need to resrepresent the public. But public opinion is all over the map. In this case, public officials need to show leadership.

## **11:03 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Woolsey was probably smart not to have a town meeting where nothing is accomplished but allowing paid protesters to show up and disrupt any discussion of information.

## **11:03 Comment From kathleen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Sea Ranch? Now there is a place everyone could run to for this meeting. Sad!

## **11:03 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

As Paul noted earlier, California put a strict cap on malpractice awards (\$250,000 for pain and suffering) in the mid-1970s (and it was sponsored by Santa Rosa Democrat Barry Keene). Yet health care isn't any less expensive here than in any other state.

I think tort reform is a good idea, but I think it's a fantasy to suggest that it's a major factor in reducing health care costs.

### **11:03 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Nick Anton, I doubt you could say the same thing about MediCal, how would you like it if that was the single payer?

### **11:03 Comment From Andy Logar**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

At least with a private health insurance system I have the option of switching to a more responsive bureaucracy. With single payer we have the efficiency of the US Post office coupled with the compassion of the IRS.

### **11:03 Comment From Rhonda Odegard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Kaiser does take care of the poor. What percentage I don't know? They are a contributor for a poor population

### **11:03 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I agree with steve - It is false to say there are people not covered by health care- All anyone has to do is go to the er - and no one is turned away

### **11:03 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I read somewhere that 70 % of the cost of a person's health care in their entire life is spent in the last year of life. If we could implement more home care and Hospice into any program- that would BE A HUGE cost savings.

### **11:04 Comment From Craig Thaler**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Why can't Kaiser take on more of the health care burden in the county? They have the biggest Hospital. Why should all the District

## **11:04 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I was contacted by Lynn Woolsey's office as the call was starting. I participated and I thought it was helpful and a good forum, but I can see from some of the comments that she should do a live town hall and open it to all her constituents.

## **11:04 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Rhoda - again the pharmacy system is highly regulated and the process for drug development is the most stringent in the world - the federal government has squeezed the industry so much that the inflated cost is a direct result

## **11:04 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Defensive medicine doesn't explain all the money wasted in medical care. When a doctor sees a patient, he/she is paid a higher fee if a prescription or test is ordered than if the consultation is only advice and education. That drives higher costs in every doctor's office in the country and it fuels laboratories, radiology clinics, outpatient surgical centers and hospitals with work that a second-opinion might save. Many examples can be found, but for one? Why are 90 year old women sent for bone-density tests? Can't it not be assumed they have thin bones. And a prescription really isn't going to help them.

## **11:04 Comment From Marylou Shira Hadditt**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Our nation is at a crossroads. We can spend ourselves to bankruptcy with the endless Afghan war or we can use those millions spent killing innocent civilians to protecting our own population with universal health care programs. We have wasted fifty years talking about Universal Health Care and we still haven't gotten there. As a civilized industrial society, we must care for our population. It is horrifying that the insurance and pharmaceutical industries have negated our voting power through buying our congressional delegations.

## **11:04 Comment From Eleanor**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

If we need tort reform to get health care passed, then fine. Let's make a deal. I'm not against tort reform. I'll join someone in that effort, if they'll join me in passing health care reform. But we can't necessarily do all at one time. We 'liberals' are not all against some form of compromise. I really don't want to be labeled like that. I'm a reasonable person, as are most of my friends who agree with me on health care.

## **11:05 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Mike Thompson generally has supported efforts to improve healthcare from a hospital perspective but after participating in his telephonic town meeting I would say he came in with his mind made up. I am disappointed.

## **11:05 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Here's how the VA works. It is not free. You serve your country and sometimes risk your life doing so.

## **11:05 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Who understands Medicare Advantage? Time for a good reporter to go after that story and explain it to us....please, Paul, would you look into that?

## **11:06 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

2 things that would help the most and should be no-brainers: first, allow insurance to be bought nation-wide; second, tort reform. Those two items alone would do a huge amount to cut costs without screwing up the system.

## **11:06 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

tort reform is critical to health care reform. The legal system is one of the costs that skyrocket health care

## **11:06 Comment From A**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

The current draft of House Bill 3200 is available online, yet most who comment, including reps, the president and bloggers haven't read the current draft of the bill. We should begin with the basics, reading and understanding the bill in its entirety, including financial and quality of care consequences. Only then can a real debate take place. Congress, the White House and the Senate need to slow down and get it right the first time. I've read this bill and it's not a "reform" in the true sense of the word, it's a whole new system, with large tax penalties and incentives. While private insurance may require additional regulation, it is not a throw away system and provides a great deal of excellent care and research and development.

## **11:06 Comment From Eleanor**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

About coverage-- I don't know about you, but I don't want my health care coming down to going to the ER for service. Have you ever been to an ER? Ever brought your child there? Ever waited for hours & hours on end? I have. Not good preventative care. Not the way to keep anyone or our society healthy.

## **11:06 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Gary, do you think the insurance companies don't ration care? This notion that the insurance companies (especially the for-profit companies that are now spending millions to fight reform) have our best interests in mind is ludicrous.

## **11:06 Comment From Rhonda Odegard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Health insurance cannot be mandatory. If you have a chose between food/shelter and health insurance. Which would you choose. This is where Washington is really out of touch with the underserved population.

## **11:06 Comment From patty van**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Hey Rhonda-you're right....kaiser does take care of the poor....ONE DAY A YEAR and it gets all the pomp and circumstance the Press Democrat can muster. How come the PD doesn't come to the other hospitals to cover the FREE CARE they provide each and every day???

## **11:06 Comment From John Turngren**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Paul, I commend your introducing "trust" into the discussion. I think that the media, including the PD, has a major role to play here by providing accurate information and critical analysis of the health care issues rather than highlighting the inflamed rhetoric and misinformation that abounds.

## **11:07 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Paul- It would be great if the PD did a "Health Care Reform for Dummies" section that outlines the plans and puts it in plain english

## **11:07 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Are town hall meetings really that scary?

Yesterday, Obama was complaining he didn't get enough tough questions.

## **11:07 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

KURT: I'm surprised you found a telephonic town meeting with Mike Thompson. He sent me a phone call but when I dialed the number, it rejected the password he gave me. I called his washington office and was given the same non-functioning password, and then never heard from him again. Not good constituent service. Time to be looking around for a candidate closer to the home folks?

## **11:09 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Readers: We've heard from several folks asking if Reps. Woolsey or Thompson are participating in this online meeting. They are welcome to, as are their staffs. If we hear from them, we'll let you know. (Or if they jump in and comment, they can on their own.)

## **11:09 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Rationing is something else we need to be honest about. Unless there's enough of everything for everybody, there will be rationing -- by time, by cost. Given that, I'm not at all offended at the bean-counters calculations that perhaps instead of helping Grandma make it from 99 to 100, we'd better spend the money on kids, etc.

## **11:10 Comment From Fred**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Jim, auto insurance not usually too burdensome because it usually doesn't cost too much. But you'll notice that some people slip through the cracks and drive without it, usually the very ones who need it the most because they are avoiding paying because they have done something to make their costs go up. Even with auto insurance, some kind of tax payed "no fault" system might be best, certainly cheaper because it would avoid a lot of litigation costs. I guess you have a point about "intrusiveness", because I don't find auto insurance requirements intrusive. But medical care is a bit different, because any government involvement gets people thinking about triage and such. If the government's only involvement was that the bill went to its address, their would be less of that feeling.

## **11:10 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

"Le'ts just say we don't live in a very trusting age right now. " Gee, Pauly boy, could it be we are tired of the government media complex?"

## **11:10 Comment From Sonoma Senior**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

What would be the impact to us retired folks and/or Medicare with health care reform?

## **11:10 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Obama says health spending is much less in Europe but in Germany for example there are high co pays and age restrictions on a wide range of procedures like cataract removal knee and hip replacement. I am afraid that is where we are heading.

## **11:10 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

ABOUT TOWN HALL MEETINGS: Wouldn't it be great if the health insurance companies held meetings, explaining how they set premiums, accept and reject applicants, pay doctors and hospitals? Wouldn't that be a hoot?

## **11:10 Comment From healthcare worker**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

All hospitals are supposed to take medical and the uninsured. I've had Kaiser try to transfer these patients out of their ER because they aren't "their patients". That's how Kaiser survives.

## **11:10 Comment From Collin Miller**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Mike, Yes I have a local doctor, but I go to S.F. for more complex procedures. They have a FREE shuttle service to and from S.F. The waiting time is never more than 15 minutes to see a doctor.

## **11:10 Comment From Nick Anton**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Mike Dolan before Medical physicians provided care to those patients for free!!!!

## **11:10 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I'm convinced that Congress will end up voting on a bill none of them have read entirely

## **11:11 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Paul -I hope this live chat will be shared with our representatives in the house and senate

## **11:11 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

With the high cost of drugs, why doesn't the federal government start developing "natural" sources of treatment in the already nationalized health programs such as Medicareand Medicaid. A lot of us use these remedies, but it's not widespread information for the average person to find easily.

## **11:11 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Paul, regarding your comment about trust, I agree completely. It's sad to know that people really think liberals would want death panels or that conservatives are just in it for the profit. I think we have more in common about what change should look like than we are understanding from each other right now.

## **11:11 Comment From Andy Logar**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Expect health costs to skyrocket if we get single payer system in place - the reason is that the flow of illegals from south of the border will become a deluge. Though language may be inserted into any Obamacare bill that will in priciple deny coverage to illegals, the fact remains that health care providers are estopped from verifying the legal status of any patient. The Democrats unfortunately are counting on this enormous, new and ever so devoted voting base to help them remain in power forever.

## **11:12 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

What about the town hall meetings we hear about where all discussion is disrupted by outside protesters? Or was that just the media hype?

## **11:12 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Michael Koepf, you are correct ASSUMING you are on one of the 8 'priority levels' set each year to receive care. If you don't fit on a chosen level you aren't eligible.

## **11:12 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Andy, it is nice that you have the option to switch to a more responsive insurance company, unfortunately many of us don't have other options except the one our employer offers.

## **11:12 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

One of the biggest areas of fraud in in the TV advertised durable medical equipment like the Scooter Store. While some disabled certainly need and should get such items for many these items are counter productive and contribute to decling as verses improved health and add to the system costs. No serius mention in the debate so fae.

## **11:12 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Congress will pass a bill this year, and Obama will declare victory. It would be too embarrassing not to.

## **11:12 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Hey, Just want to toss in some preliminary results of our latest online survey.

Seventy-five percent of respondentssay they "strongly agree" with the statement: "Health care reform in America is necessary, and Congress needs to take action."

Meanwhile, only 9 percent said they "strongly agree" with the statement, "Health care reform is important, but the nation can't afford it right now given the economy." Thirteen percent said they "somewhat agree" while 64 percent say they strongly disagree.

So far 243 people have responded.

## **11:13 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

In Montana Obama held a "town meeting" in an airport hanger 7 miles outside Bozman and entrace was highly selective. And, hey, where to they get those puppets that they always stage behind him?

## **11:13 Comment From Charlie B.**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I agree with Brooke Clyde - the end of life care is too expensive, we shouldn't spend money on getting people to extend their lives from 95 to 96 years old.

## **11:15 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Hey- finally the talk about another big problem- the illegal immigrants and health care. Do a poll question on that one Paul!

## **11:15 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Are Medicare beneficiaries among our participants satisfied with their coverage? Would you prefer a system outside the government?

## **11:15 Comment From Bob Hawthorne**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Of course none of this is free. But we have a disasterous

## **11:15 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

part of the problem with the health care system are illegal aliens.

## **11:15 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

how about a flash poll of participants: Should our elected officials have public meetings?

## **11:15 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Medicare does need to have some improvements to be universal: Control over duplication of services, elimination of fraudulent overcharges by some providers, and even more efficient administration costs than the current low of 3%. Medicare for all will be affordable with these changes and the ability to negotiate prices that a large membership provides.

## **11:16 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

From corporal mike. 18 months in South East Asia gets me through the levels.

## **11:16 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Great idea for insurance co. to have meetings of any type to talk to the public! My private ins. just turned down coverage of my prescription.

## **11:16 Comment From Cynthia Vrooman**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I am approaching 65. I am worried for my children and grandchildren who through no fault of their own cannot afford healthcare. I look into my grandson's eyes and wonder why our country is choosing to abandon our children? We have rationed healthcare in the extreme. Those who can afford it ,or have an employer who provides it, are the lucky ones. Healthcare should not be for the lucky few. Clinics do what they can but follow up is so difficult and in some cases prescriptions are recommended but the patient cannot afford the medicine. I know too many people who are in that predicament. Thompson was present at a health forum which was held in a town hall format. It was in Napa and was well attended. The insurance companies have too much power. They are the consummate bureaucrat between us and our doctors and they have an immense conflict of interest. They want profit which comes with denying coverage and dropping the sick. We need someone who cares about the health of the person not the bottom line or what Wall Street might think. Both of my daughters were denied coverage for pre-existing conditions which were minor issues. I am appalled at the lack of compassion for the uninsured and underinsured. Some of the town hall meetings are scary when people carry guns. I think I would not attend a meeting if I saw people carrying guns. A person who carries a firearm in public means to intimidate. Scares the h..... out of me. Please we need compassionate reform.

## **11:16 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

charlie b and clide - who will make those decisions ?

## **11:16 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I'm personally grateful we are "admonished" to alliterate our otherwise un-elucidated opinion on something this vital. WE need to have this kind of dialogue. This is how we as the people learn how other people think

## **11:16 Comment From Eleanor**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Illegal immigration needs to be addressed. I think we all need to be involved in that discussion when that issue comes around. But again, we can't do everything at once. If we all stay

politically active, we can work on a way to reasonably address immigration. We have to, and everyone on all sides will need to make some compromises. But again, we can't do it all at once.

## **11:16 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I agree Nick Anton, but my point is; how about a single payer system and MediCal was the only payer? Could you stay in business?

## **11:16 Comment From John Turngren**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Andy, if we need to use the "argument from analogy," the Post Office isn't a completely government-run organization--it's a public-private entity. More accurate analogies to a single-payer system are the fire department or the police department--both are taxpayer-funded and government run organizations that fulfill basic needs and rights in our society. Shouldn't universal Access to health care be just as much a right as the right to protection and public safety that the police department provides?

## **11:16 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

If we go to a government program that still allows illegal immigrants health care via the Emergency Rooms- we haven't dealt with one of the biggest cost factors impacting emergency care.

## **11:17 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I'm shocked that so many think we have a health care crisis. That 45 million number is an exaggeration -- take out those who are eligible for programs but don't sign up; those who are young and choose to go without (not a bad decision if you're 25); and illegals. You're left with, I hear, 5-10 million. Let's deal with them.

## **11:17 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

End of Life Care is expensive but do we want something like England or Canada where most cancer patients are denied coverage or have to stand in line so long they typically die first or if they can afford it come here to get care.

## **11:17 Comment From Janet M**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
I am on Medicare and I am very happy with my coverage.

### **11:17 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Yes, our elected officials should have meetings. Absolutely.

### **11:18 Comment From Guest**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Public forums & debate confirm what we already know: everyone cares about health care . .it's availability, its cost, its quality. What most of us (including me) don't have is sufficient knowledge of the issues to decide on (or at least have confidence in) possible solutions. There are many stakeholders, some with more influence than others. I'd like to see more effort put into building public awareness of and confidence in a working group of experts whose assignment is to effectively define the issues and offer proposals for public consumption and debate. Right now, I'm not confident in my sources: i.e. politicians, drug companies, insurance companies, cable news, etc, etc. (did I include politicians?). We've opened a hornets nest and that environment will not be conducive to rational community or task force dialogue. I'm glad the topic is on the table. I hope we are wise enough to build a consensus before we take action .

### **11:18 Comment From Charlie B**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Wendy - Other countries make those decisions now.

### **11:18 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
I'd like to turn Obama's campaign pledge on it's head: he promised everyone a plan like the congress enjoys. OK, so let's require all public officials to join his "public option". That would kill it SO fast ...

### **11:18 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Lee and John,  
You make a good point. We do plan to run some kind of primer on the health care reform debate on our pages. The problem is this debate is so fluid who knows what we will have or won't have come the fall. But we are working on that.

### **11:18 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Have the parents or grand parents of autistic children noticed the proposed cuts or savings proposed in this area. All should take note and call their Congressman.

## **11:18 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

SASKATOON — The incoming president of the Canadian Medical Association says this country's health-care system is sick and doctors need to develop a plan to cure it. Dr. Anne Doig says patients are getting less than optimal care and she adds that physicians from across the country - who will gather in Saskatoon on Sunday for their annual meeting - recognize that changes must be made. "We all agree that the system is imploding, we all agree that things are more precarious than perhaps Canadians realize," Doig said in an interview with The Canadian Press.

## **11:18 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

too many people between the patient and the provider, and they all want to make a living - with a government run system this will be much worse

## **11:18 Comment From Sonoma Senior**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I agree with Janet, Medicare is very good.

## **11:18 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Brooke:

Setting aside for a moment the question of how many are uninsured, are you sanguine about the rate of health care inflation? Or trend lines showing health care quickly rising to about 20 or 25 percent of GDP?

## **11:19 Comment From Jane S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

As a Medicare recipient, I am satisfied. I know that the \$800 per month we pay would be much more and have higher deductibles. We both have "pre-existing conditions" and would be charged even more without Medicare.

## **11:19 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Michael Koepf, funny my time in southeast asia (Vietnam) didn't qualify me.

## **11:19 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

TV advertising directly to patients for government-paid scooters, diabetic services, and prescriptions are frauds and should be outlawed. Congress could do it, but the costs of campaigns for public office turn members of congress into delivery boys and girls for the huge donors. Max Baucus heads the Finance Committee; former staff members have found cushy jobs with major insurance companies: Any wonder he's against single-payor and public plans? A good guy there has really gone wrong on this issue. PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING would do a lot to reduce the dependence of incumbent members of Congress on the largesse of gigantic corporations -- which seem forever feeding at the public trough while protecting their turf.

## **11:19 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I'm seeing a lot of comments about illegal aliens. So if an illegal alien goes to a hospital with an acute condition, what do we do with them? I agree that we need to fight illegal immigration with sound policy and by helping other countries build viable economies, but to even suggest that we would leave human beings to die in the streets is one that I cannot support.

## **11:19 Comment From SH**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

We had insurance for a small business through Costco Insurance. The best plan we could find. We were spending over \$15,000.00 a year for insurance, including the deductible. We have been on Medicare for almost 2 years and our Medicare insurance, including

## **11:19 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I agree with Kurt Hahn- end of life care and Emergency care are two costs centers killing us

## **11:20 Comment From Eleanor**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

You shouldn't be shocked by the health care crisis. I guess you just haven't been effected ... 'yet.' Just try being denied health care for pre-existing conditions and trying to find adequate coverage elsewhere. Just look in the paper at how many communities are raising money for people which sick children, because the costs are out-of -this world. No crisis? Come on people!

## **11:20 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Anybody heading to Canada for health care this week?

## **11:20 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Instead of illegals or uninsured being treated in emergency rooms, there should be clinics available that will be much less costly than the emergency room. Send people to those clinics and don't treat them in the emergency rooms.

## **11:20 Comment From Collin Miller**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
From my RN partner Nancy: End of life care discussions are currently being done by practitioners. It is part of the total care of the patient. And it gives the patient the right to make decisions about their care. Many do not understand what the options are...and do not know how painful some of them are, such as being sustained by a ventilator. If the treatment does not make a difference, and the outcome will be the same, the patient has a right to know that so an informed decision can be made. This conversation takes time and sensitivity...and it does NOT mean that anyone decides for the patient - it is NOT a DEATH PANEL, by any stretch of the imagination. The time that a physician spends consulting should be reimbursed, that is all that this bill includes.

## **11:20 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Brooke Clyde: Public employees are already in a "public option" -- that's what Obama means when he uses the term. Give you and me the same choices that members of Congress enjoy and we'll pick our own insurance companies from that list. Add one more, the local community clinic and we'll be just fine.

## **11:20 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Medicare is good from the patient's point of view - if you can keep a doctor who will take the reimbursement

## **11:20 Comment From Chinese Noodle**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

How about rewarding people or giving them "credit" for maintaining a healthy weight, blood pressure, exercise, etc?

## **11:20 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

gretchen - illegal aliens need to pay for their care - at their ability to pay

## **11:22 Comment From Cynthia Vrooman**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Yes, the issue of illegal immigration needs to be addressed. But I think we need to address the needs of our citizens but providing them with a public option for healthcare. We certainly cannot wait for the illegal immigration issue to be solved before we address healthcare. Too much is at stake.

## **11:22 Comment From Tom Martin**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

The health care 'crisis' is not just the number of uninsured or under-insured, it is the cost of insurance and care. Medical insurance should not be a for-profit endeavor.

## **11:22 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Jim, the trend doesn't bother me too much. First, the richer one is, the higher percentage of wealth one would expect to pay for health care. Second, I believe that MAJOR cost savings can be had by allowing nationwide purchase of insurance and, critically, TORT REFORM.

## **11:22 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

The point is that if someone comes to a hospital from an accident or needs urgent care and is an illegal immigrant- give them the care, then deport them.

## **11:22 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

health care is the only system where professionals care for the patient and then hope to be paid for it

## **11:23 Comment From Jen G**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Can someone please address for me why our government can allow this to go on...why is healthcare coverage not better managed...this all reminds me of the bank bailouts...all that money and no one watched a darn thing - where does all the money go???

## **11:23 Comment From Tom Martin**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Chinese Noodle.... virtue is it's own reward.

## **11:23 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Reasonable Medicare refms like gradually increasing the retirement age (which will happen many baby boomers due to deminished 401K's) and applicating a gradual increase to Medicare taxable wages had always seemed reasonable to me yet has not been a part of the discussion nor has the projection that our entire Medicare system will go broke in 8-10 years without any changes.

## **11:23 Comment From Al & Bev Bertaina**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

"Those clinics" are being closed due to state budget cuts. Would you want to depend on them for your health care?

## **11:23 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Chinese noodle has a good idea for wellness incentives for people to take care of themselves. It is working in companies around the country.

## **11:24 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Brooke, what about my previous question regarding tort reform? What difference has it made in California. Again, philosophically, I don't disagree with you. But on the bottom line, I see no evidence that MICRA reduce health care costs in California.

## **11:24 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Talk about high cost, try being self-employed and trying to get affordable health care. Our coverage went up to \$1334/mo and that was for \$2000. deductible. The people who have never been affected because they work for a large company that provides care have no idea.

## **11:24 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Kurt,

I agree we need to have a serious discussion about end-of-life care - and costs.

I'm disappointed that the "end-of-life discussions" issue has now been dropped from the discussion. The health care bill passed by three House of called for doctors to be reimbursed for voluntary counselling sessions about "end of life" decisions. This was killed bascially because Sarah Palin described as a death panel. This is absurd. Everyone should be having these discussions with their loved ones and family members. Just because I tell my doctor and children that I don't want to be kept alive by machines- that's a death panel?

## **11:24 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Mike Dolan, you probably do qualify and need to speak with a good VA representative. The VA in Palo Alto is the best to visit, and I would be more than happy to assist you.

## **11:24 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Gretchen, no one can be denied emergency care in America. A law was passed in 1986 called EMTALA. It's worth you looking it up to see what it says. The hospitals are not allowed to check immigration status or insurance before admitting someone to the emergency room. that's why you see so many people showing up for what should be preventative care issues - they know they will (eventually) be seen.

## **11:24 Comment From SH**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Our Medicare insurance, including our supplemental is less than 2/3s of our original policy for the business. I think that there should be a public option and it should similar to Medicare. Those who are content with their present coverage will find that their insurance premiums are going to

go up and up, either through their employment or privately. They will wonder why they were against a public option

## **11:24 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Health care in Massachusetts is MANDATORY. You must have it and you must pay for it. Does that sound like America?

## **11:25 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

clinics are being closed because of low reimbursement

## **11:25 Comment From Santa Rosa Attorney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Who will protect patients from incompetent physicians with tort reform?

## **11:25 Comment From Richard Cullinen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

This issue is not just about Lynn Woolsey or Mike Thompson. It is about every elected official that has built up their personal coffers with money from unregulated insurance and pharmaceutical titans. Every vote related to healthcare is tainted by the hundreds of millions of dollars distributed by lobbyists. This pot of gold is not a gift-the recipients are beholden to the for-profit conglomerates. When greed is driving policy, as in the obsession for driving up profit for corporate executives and stockholders, innocent people will have to pay, This could mean limitation of services, denial of coverage or even bankruptcy. The country desperately needs not-for-profit medical care for everyone. Subsidize medical students and nurses now! For a country that commanded such respect worldwide for so many years, it has significantly fallen behind many of the industrialized nations in the world. It's time to lead by example again and come together with humanitarian solutions

## **11:25 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Joe, would you change EMTALA? Should hospitals do immigration checks? And would that necessitate national ID cards?

## **11:25 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I like Chinese Noodle's comment- let's reward people for being healthy. Let's face it- we are a society one Big Mac away from a heart attack

## **11:26 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Mary, I think you're wrong. "Public Option" seems to mean a particular plan, not the gold-plated options our elected officials get. Either way, let Obama propose exact equality between public officials and the public and see how long that idea lasts ...

## **11:26 Comment From Nick Anton**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Mike Dolan: I probably couldn't stay in business with Medical rates, but I could definitely stay in business with Medicare rates IF every patient were a Medicare patient. I would need less office personnel to deal with MULTIPLE insurance companies who require pre-authorizations for treatments, referrals, and certain medications. I would need an incredibly smaller billing department as all bills are sent on-line to Medicare and are usually paid in 2-3 weeks. Even though Medicare reimbursement is lower than most private carriers, the reduction in office overhead would be significant. And as soon as primary care physicians are reimbursed appropriately relative to their specialist peers, I would be in an even better position. But thanks for your concern.

## **11:26 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I don't hear much in the debate about the self insured. Good issue- talking about business coverage- what about the self insured people?

## **11:26 Comment From J Fisher**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

everyone should have what I have. VA benefits, I had spinal meningitis 8 days in the hosp. No charge.

## **11:26 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

The number of patients in hospice care that think what they are getting is too expensive is zero. Believe it because some day you will be in that bed.

## **11:26 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Richard, it does sound like car insurance in California and 49 other states ...

## **11:26 Comment From carlos**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I agree with Chinese noodle. Invest a little today in education and being proactive instead of being reactive like our insurance companies.

## **11:26 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

don't forget that the healthcare industry represents 1/6 of the total economy

## **11:27 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

For those who missed this news item since you've been on this forum, this happened earlier this month. Surely, a voice who had a lot to say about health care reform and Washington politics.

<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20090818/NEWS/908189980/>

## **11:28 Comment From John Turngren**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Wendy, you are right that we have "too many people between the patient and the provider"-- that's the way the private health insurance system works (and the more roadblocks and obstacles that the insurance companies can throw in, the more money they make off of us). The basic purpose of a government-Administered (not government "run"), single-payer system is to eliminate all the middle men so that we can have affordable health care that all of us have access to as a basic right, funded by a fair, equitable progressive tax system so that our "premiums" are based on what we can afford, given our income level. In

## **11:28 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Here's some more tentative results from our survey:

Sixty-three percent say they strongly agree with this statement: "Health Care reform needs to include a 'public option' for health insurance in order to encourage private insurance companies to keep costs down."

Fifteen percent say they "somewhat agree." Fifteen percent say they "strongly disagree."

What surprises me is that only 4 percent say they are unsure. As this discussion shows, people have strong opinions about this. And they've educated themselves.

## **11:28 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Richard Cullinen: Hear ! Hear !

## **11:28 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Taking care of illegal immigrants makes sense. Their care is essential to the overall goals of community health programs. Disease prevention programs can't work unless everyone is included.

## **11:29 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Attorney - the idea that lawyers protect the system is self-serving and inaccurate. If it were required that you all work at a reasonable hourly rate, rather than 30-50% contingency, I bet no attorney would do it. I bet

## **11:29 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Interestingly many illegals working in our vineyards have employer supplied insurance but don't use it because they fear exposure of the fact they have false social security numbers. This part of our population often make cash payments to hospital according to their ability to pay when here dependent of where we are in the season. More of our agriculturalist's should follow the green card process to get their workers as some do as the PD reported earlier.

## **11:29 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
When did access to "affordable healthcare" become a right? What other rights are in store for us? Who is going to pay for all of these new rights? If you think that you can tax "the rich" to the point of giving everyone else a free ride, you might be in for a big surprise.

## **11:29 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Joe, I understand that the current law says we cannot deny care to anyone, but what I'm seeing are suggestions to the contrary as part of reform. Maybe I'm reading too much into the anger over the comments about illegal aliens.

## **11:29 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Nick Anton,

## **11:30 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Nick Anton, my point is, what assurance do you have that ANY single payer plan will not be underfunded like MediCal is?

## **11:30 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Yes, Gretchen, the insurance companies can and do ration care. But if they do, as someone said earlier, I have the ability to go to another insurance company who will do a better job. Where will you turn if you are upset with big brother when they are the only game in town? Competition keeps companies honest. Government takeovers effectively END competition.

## **11:30 Comment From Chinese Noodle**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Would you deny care to a bleeding patient if they are an illegal? What kind of society do we have? What does that say about our judea/christian values as a country?

## **11:30 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Jim- don't we have an easy way to do a national ID- Social Security cards. The point is- the hospitals shouldn't have to carry the burden for failed immigration policies. Right now- the government doesn't reimburse hospitals for all that care they are giving and THEY are paying for.

## **11:31 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
please make the connection - private insurance companies base their reimbursements on MEDICARE

## **11:31 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Obama should look at healthcare in Japan in which private health insurance covers all and theiris no rationing.

## **11:31 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

EMTALA is currently the law of the land. Congress can take that issue up when they debate immigration reform. there's a larger issue at play there: the integration of the immigrant community into American society, which is beyond the range of this discussion.

## **11:31 Comment From Amy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Will healthcare reform include a reduction in prescription costs? It seems like the US pays so much for prescriptions and yet has more buying power than so many other countries. The US government should use its market clout to reduce costs.

## **11:31 Comment From Rhonda Odegard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

We need to have more medical professionals at the front end that have policy experience that can guide us, lead us into well run system. Get the Washington politics out of this health care arena. This is not about who wins and loses. It's about providing the most efficient, managed care for the most amount of people. The politicians and the media are doing a lot of damage to the health care debate.

## **11:31 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

stuart - many illigal aliens come to this country for the free care they can get

## **11:31 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

What is so disheartening about the National Debate is End of Life care represents the bulk of the health care costs and will with the baby boomers- it is just too political- but there are solutions like more home care, nursing and Hospice- those work

## **11:31 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I agree, there has not been enough discussion about the self- insured. We are the ones that are taking it in the shorts.

## **11:32 Comment From kathleen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

There will always be people who need "free" help. But, if fifty people were to show up at my door every night for food, I would soon be hungry myself. This is what has happened to our health care system. As a person who has worked with many different segments of our community, I am angry at the time spent by many in "using the system". Some really need it but many think they are entitled to free care. Everyone needs to pay.

## **11:32 Comment From Jane S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

The distortion of the discussion of end of life decisions and living wills into "death panels" doesn't speak too highly of the intelligence of American voters. That some of the people carrying on about "death panels" are self-described Christians who maintain a belief in the afterlife makes this all the more shocking.

## **11:32 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Ok Chinese Noodle- Yes, if bleeding put a bandage on and call INS

## **11:32 Comment From Amy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

We should expand immigrant visas that would include healthcare insurance. This could be used for the wine industry and other agricultural industries.

## **11:32 Comment From Lucy Barnett**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Studies done at Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania have shown hospice care for terminally ill people saves thousands of dollars per diagnosis but more importantly, delivers better outcomes (better care) and people under hospice care actually live longer as they are getting the support they need and their families need. Live longer! Figure that. Not on a case by case basis, but overall it's what the statistics prove. Feel better and live longer, now why is that a bad thing?

## **11:32 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

END OF LIFE planning need not always been done one-on-one with a doctor. Some churches have urged their congregations to address these issues and even provided workshops to help them. Health care providers usually have forms. Time spent with a doctor need not be more than a few minutes if the real work has been ahead of time.

## **11:32 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Jim: Car insurance is mandatory in order to protect the other driver. It is the liability insurance that you must have. You are not being forced to protect your own property. Your body is your own property and you shouldn't be forced to protect it either. That is a personal decision. The government has no business in it.

## **11:33 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Gary, as I mentioned, I don't have the option to change insurance companies because my employer offers two: Kaiser and another one that is completely unaffordable.

## **11:33 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

The Blue Cross/Blue Shield conglomerate is in charge and there aren't many other options.

## **11:33 Comment From Santa Rosa Attorney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Brooke - From time to time, I represent patient/clients PRO BONO on medical malpractice cases. All attorneys are not bad and we do a service to those harmed by neglect.

## **11:33 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Obama thinks improved treatment of those with Chronic Diseases can save billions and her may infact be rights but changing the focus of such care to specialized Clinics or Hospitals has not been broadly tested and is opposed by the AMA who perfers it all be a Doctor's offices. In some areas like this we need pilot programs to test the benefits of various approaches a versus some HHS bureaucrat determining to new way of doing business.

## **11:33 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

But isn't our care being rationed already? I know of plenty of people who hold off on doctor visits because of the hassle with getting an appointment with a specialist or the out-of-pocket expenses.

## **11:34 Comment From Lorraine**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Tort reform with eliminating malpractice insurance needs to be the first part of our reform because then doctors could practice as they are trained, not because of their fear of legal action. Is this in the actual plan now.

### **11:34 Comment From Collin Miller**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

No health care crisis? The #1 cause of bankruptcies are health care costs. That says it all.

### **11:34 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Gary makes a good point. Hi, Gary. Obama often makes the point that he wants to save money by mandating the use of "best practices". Sounds good, until you realize that best practices grow out of a diversity of practices. With a single practice mandated, we'll kill the very thing - variation - that allows us to decide what is in fact the best practice.

### **11:34 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Wendy, illegals coming here at all is a separate issue. If they are here, they must be cared for.

### **11:34 Comment From Bob Hawthorne**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Of course, none of this is free. We have disastrous and dysfunctional health system which can't control costs and can't provide universal care. We all pay for an incredible bureaucracy, overused emergency, overcharged hospitals providing free care. Why all the fear of changing to something proven to work, and is in place now?

### **11:34 Comment From Dorothy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

The faith community is very interested in providing care to the uninsured and under insured. We now have many retired RN's.

### **11:35 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Yes, health care is rationed right now with insurance companies.

### **11:35 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Health Care is rationed now. Even those with insurance can't get certain treatments.

### **11:35 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Why isn't there a medical equivalent of the 'assigned risk' pool for bad drivers. Here it would be for people with preexisting conditions.

### **11:35 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Richard, what happens if you show up at a hospital without insurance or the ability to pay? Doesn't that become the hidden responsibility of everyone else through higher premiums to cover the cost of uncompensated care? I think you could make the case -- at least I could -- that that is roughly equivalent to auto liability insurance.

### **11:35 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

paul- our system is rationed and getting worse

### **11:35 Comment From Amy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

Yes, our healthcare is already rationed. Many people also do not fill their prescriptions because they can't afford them.

### **11:36 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I think the final decision has to be around - are we going to decide health care is a right that should be covered under the constitution like... Life Liberty Health Care and the pursuit of Happiness. Then lets put all our money to it.

### **11:36 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago

I wouldn't worry too much about the AMA -- last statistic I read was that only about 20% of doctors belong to that organization. It's one more outfit to protect the wealth and elite-ness of its members. Message: That party's over.

### **11:36 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
stuart - please remember the closing of hospitals along the boarder

## **11:36 Comment From Jen G**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Perhaps I need to meet with Lee Brown so I can learn more but tell me - WHY can't our government who is there to help us REALLY help us...how much red tape and bs will we have to go thru just to get a real/satisfying solution?

## **11:37 Comment From Richard Cullinen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
Mr Gaffney, The surprise is that up to 90% of America's corporations do business offshore and are paying no federal taxes. The rich have not been paying their fair share for years! If that missing revenue is added to the equation, health care for all could become reality

## **11:38 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 1 hour ago  
I think health care should not be the responsibility of employers. Some are self-employed. Everyone needs it and not everyone works for a large company. People also lose their jobs. It should be independent of employers. Every one should have to pay, BUT, at reasonable rates.

## **11:39 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 59 minutes ago  
Attorney. Hey, I'm a lawyer, too, and I don't think all lawyers are bad. In fact, I think most are very good people. However, people respond to incentives, and the lottery payoffs of the current system make no sense. A few injured people (and,of course, lawyers) hit it big, while most remain neglected. Why be afraid of tort reform?

## **11:39 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 59 minutes ago  
jim - it happens all the time - that is why the hospital system is so strained.

## **11:39 Comment From Ken**

Today, August 18, 2009, 59 minutes ago  
If the way government is running Social Security into the ground is any indication, the last thing we need is for them to start doling out health care

## **11:39 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 59 minutes ago

In this last half hour or so, I would really like to get into the issue of how we pay for reform. President Obama has back-tracked from his campaign pledge that middle-class Americans could see a reduction of \$2,500 with his health care plan. That's clearly is not going to happen. But how do we pay for it? According to the Congressional Budget Office, the House version will cost \$239 billion over 10 years and one of the Senate bills will cost \$597 billion. Can this be made deficit-neutral as the president has pledged? Would you be willing to pay more in taxes in order to save on insurance?

## **11:39 Comment From Celesta Deter**

Today, August 18, 2009, 59 minutes ago

I'm a senior citizen and I highly resent the idea that seniors are so stupid or deluded that they will believe anything they are told. I know exactly what the Health Care Reform is all about and I solidly support the Public Option.

## **11:39 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 59 minutes ago

Coverage is certainly rationed by the largest companies. Blue Cross personally.

## **11:39 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 59 minutes ago

Jim: You are exactly correct. Insurance patients pay 120 % of the actual cost to cover the uninsured and others who don't pay. If you have insurance, you pay twice. One for you and one for someone else.

## **11:39 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 59 minutes ago

Related to funding - another trojan horse is that this will be paid for in a tax on the rich only. If it were true, it would be unfair to provide care for everyone by taxing a very few. But it's not true. A single payer, or public option, would be very, very costly and would eventually require taxes from everyone to keep it afloat. That is as it should be. But it is highly disingenuous for Obama to continue to claim that we can do this with a tax on the rich and the imaginary "bending of the cost curve." Again, many of us don't trust the promoters of this program because of all the deception.

## **11:41 Comment From John Turngren**

Today, August 18, 2009, 57 minutes ago

Joe, a progressive income tax is not the same thing as taxing the rich and giving everyone else a free ride. And it's not a question of "when did access to health care become a right?" Instead, the point is to decide that it should be a right--just as basic as a right to shelter, food, etc. Some things are basic to our humane survival as human beings sharing a common life on this planet. Virtually every other industrialized, first-world country has this basic agreement about what constitutes the "common good" among its citizens except the United States. Universal access to high-quality, affordable health care benefits everyone by reducing the risks to public health. For example, we may be facing a swine flu epidemic this winter. Wouldn't universal access to health care greatly increase our ability to deal with this situation?

## **11:41 Comment From Nancy S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 57 minutes ago

Say Brooke, you may have something there. Let's require that all public officials obtain their own insurance - and be denied or dropped for pre-existing conditions - oops, Dick Cheney, you are not eligible...too bad

## **11:41 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 57 minutes ago

response to Mike Dolan. You can't "always" control your health the same way you can control your driving.

## **11:41 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 57 minutes ago

Gary, true enough. But would this have been any more palatable if they had sold this as a tax-increase from the outset?

## **11:41 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 57 minutes ago

One of the highest contributor to health care costs is the current federally imposed paper work requirements. If Obama wants to cut costs as a priority he should start with the Federal government first and eliminate much of the Federal redtake. An example is the Medicaid waiver process and the hurdles States must jump thru to reform their systems. Another is the 42,000 procedures in which every provider accumulates cost under and the government or insurers reimburse. Europe has less than a quarter of these categories for medical procedures.

## **11:41 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 57 minutes ago

re: BEST PRACTICES: No one is talking about a single solution or single prescribed treatment. Best practices includes a broad range of scientific research that takes into account the diversity of human bodies, health histories, various approaches to treatment disease and conditions, and even happenstance and miracles. Anyone who says the government will create one way to treat cancer, or any other disease, is not doing much reading.

## **11:41 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 57 minutes ago

Gary, I would happily pay more in taxes if my costs were less. I may make out even better in the long run.

## **11:41 Comment From Al & Bev Bertaina**

Today, August 18, 2009, 57 minutes ago

Medicare Part D, drug coverage is the one thing about Medicare that should be changed. My mother stopped taking some of her expensive meds because she went into the "donut hole" mid-year and never came out by the end of the year. That's because Medicare CANNOT negotiate the cost of drugs with drug manufacturers.

## **11:42 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 56 minutes ago

Jen G, in my opinion you would need to go through a lot of red-tape type BS firts. After you are on the plan OK, but first there would be many hoops to jump through and a long wait.

## **11:42 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 56 minutes ago

Repeal the Bush tax cuts and we can afford health care for all.

## **11:42 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 56 minutes ago

Canada will treat anyone within their borders, citizen or not. During the flu vaccine shortage a few years ago, I was able to make an appointment with a Vancouver B.C. clinic set up to treat visitors.

## **11:42 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 56 minutes ago

if nationalized heath care is so good - how come medicare reimbursement is dropping. ?  
medicare is linked to social security and the trust is in trouble

## **11:43 Comment From Rhonda Odegard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 55 minutes ago

Yes, the practice of defensive medicine is very expensive and ties right into the end of life discussions that people need with their physicians. If they don't have those discussions then it's wide open. The medical system will do surgery, provide life support at a huge expense a few weeks before death. Get real, we have all dealt with a loved one dying of cancer that gets resuscitated and sent to the hospital. Yes, this is the high cost of dying. That's the problem in a nut shell. Washington politicians don't get it. They just want to spin it. Stop the spin, it's a fact that needs addressing

## **11:43 Comment From Kurt Hahn**

Today, August 18, 2009, 55 minutes ago

Must go now. Thank you PD for conducting this town meeting form. Maybe our congress members should try the same.

## **11:43 Comment From Jen G**

Today, August 18, 2009, 55 minutes ago

Healthcare should be a right! We are all here on earth together and we should be focused on taking care of each other! No worrying about who's paying for what.

## **11:43 Comment From Nick Anton**

Today, August 18, 2009, 55 minutes ago

Richard: Your health does impact society, financially when our premiums rise (on average by a \$1000 a year ) to help compensate for uninsured care. A damaged car has no such effect!!

## **11:43 Comment From Peter McCormick**

Today, August 18, 2009, 55 minutes ago

Great point Mary end of life planning should not take a lot of time with your doctor but I believe it should be required of all after a certian age. And wishes should be immediately available to Doctors so they don't get postponed as they were with my grandmother after her stroke.

## **11:43 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 55 minutes ago

Karol R, I agree with you regarding insurance being tied to your employer, but currently the large employers are the only entities with enough purchasing power to force insurance companies to be competitive.

## **11:43 Comment From Nancy S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 55 minutes ago

Mary, good point re: the PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING. There is way too much influence on politicians by corporate interests. No wonder there is such an erosion of trust.

## **11:43 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 55 minutes ago

charging the rich or raising taxes- will simply be passed on to everyone

## **11:43 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 55 minutes ago

I pay \$700 per month for health insurance and over \$9,000 in other costs my insurance won't cover. No national health plan will cost me that much. I'm for a tax to cover it

## **11:44 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 54 minutes ago

Mr. Cullinen. You are right about off shore money laundering. It should be stopped and taxes should be paid. BUT, what about those who do pay taxes, but just have higher incomes? Should they pay 20% of their income and others pay 2% for the same healthcare coverage?????

## **11:44 Comment From Al & Bev Bertaina**

Today, August 18, 2009, 54 minutes ago

PD, you should be asking if people are willing to pay more in taxes to allow everyone to be covered.

## **11:44 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 54 minutes ago

Paul: I think that, in theory, most people would be willing to pay for better health care for all. Those of us opposed to the things we're hearing out of D.C. right now are simply afraid that this is all too much, too fast. The Law of Unforeseen Consequences is just waiting to pounce. Let's start small: tort reform and a nation-wide market. See how it goes. Baby steps.

## **11:44 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 54 minutes ago

"Would you be billing to pay more in taxes in order to save on insurance?" what does this exactly mean: take money out of one pocket put it in another and then take it out of that?

## **11:44 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 54 minutes ago

Jim, you make a good point. However we don't live in a perfect world and we cannot make it so. We must treat those who are American citizens who have no other means. Those with the means who have chosen not to have health care should be made to bear the financial responsibility of receiving it. We cannot and should not treat people who have chronic diseases who are not in this country leagally.

## **11:44 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 54 minutes ago

Another problem, in my opinion is this: the money paid to the health care providers is whacky. For example, I recently had 2 different experiences wherein I was billed over \$300,000 each. Insurance paid a tiny fraction of that, predicated upon the contract rate. If I had been paying out of my pocket they would have insisted on the entire \$300,000. Why the huge disparity?

## **11:44 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 54 minutes ago

kurt - I have never seen the government cut any paperwork or regulations

## **11:45 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 53 minutes ago

There are ways to pay for it. End of Life Costs, Illegal immigration, Paperwork- all of these would reduce costs. It appears, however that no one has the political backbone to pass real reform so ... tax is the next place they will go

## **11:45 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 53 minutes ago

Wendy- It is because the Republicans keep slashing the funding. It is all part of a "Starve the Beast" strategy.

## **11:45 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 53 minutes ago

Paying for health care: Electronic health records save huge amounts of money, not just in paper but in clinical processes. The best health caregivers have already invested in them but I suppose the government will have to order-it-up and pay for it -- which is how the government gets business to do anything these [days](#).When I had cancer, I had to repeat my identity information, family and health history at six different sites -- doctor, hospital, surgery, oncology, second-

opinion -- where someone had to dictate it and someone else transcribe and file the records. This doesn't begin to described the repetitive paper work -- and the amount that gets lost as it follows the patient around. I want to carry a neat little chip in my wallet with information that only I and a medical facility can open.

## **11:45 Comment From Elaine**

Today, August 18, 2009, 53 minutes ago

I'd like to hear from other self-insureds! How do you manage? My husband is 64 and self-employed and I am 59, laid off from my job -- we spend over \$11,000/yr. on premiums alone -- I have a deductible of \$3500 and am at a higher tier rate on Blue Shield due to 2 minor "pre-existing" conditions (I was lucky to get any insurance at all!). The high out of pocket expenses work to keep me from going to the doctor like I should. And yet, I have fewer pre-existing conditions than many people who get insurance via their employers at less cost! To me, this is highly prejudicial on behalf of the insurance companies. For those of you with insurance through an employer, do you really think you could afford insurance if you lost your job?

## **11:45 Comment From dawna gallagher**

Today, August 18, 2009, 53 minutes ago

As a nutritionist I know an investment in prevention could slow down our current slide to bankruptcy nationally due to the greed or big Pharma and Ins. single payer only way

## **11:45 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 53 minutes ago

Yes, Mike, but the U.S. government would have even more purchasing power than any company.

## **11:46 Comment From John Turngren**

Today, August 18, 2009, 52 minutes ago

I agree with Lee Brown. We, as a society need to decide that health care is a right--that's what every other industrial nation has done. We certainly have the ability to fund it--we can learn how to do it from looking at the systems of these other countries. For starters, what about reducing the size of the bloated military budget?

## **11:46 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 52 minutes ago

Brooke,

I couldn't agree more. We need to start somewhere, otherwise the finish line will be the starting line once again.

## **11:47 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 51 minutes ago  
please remember that taxes can be moved and reassigned

## **11:47 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 51 minutes ago  
Mike Dolan: Wouldn't you enjoy a seminar on how those \$300,000 costs are decided and how they apply to other patients -- and how the revenue is used by the organization charging you. I sure would. We could call it a Town Hall Meeting. .

## **11:47 Comment From Richard Cullinen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 51 minutes ago  
Paul, we can afford to pay for healthcare for all by reducing our so-called national defense budget. Do we really need to prioritize the profits of war over the health of the American people? Mary K knows the answer to that question. I'm OK with paying additional taxes providing it benefits a complete system of healthcare and education for all.

## **11:47 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 51 minutes ago  
Mary Kinsell, if electronic health care records would save so much, as Obama claims, why are we not doing it now? Why are we waiting for a new plan to be approved?

## **11:47 Comment From Jane S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 51 minutes ago  
The key issue of costs that keeps getting missed is that this cost of \$239 billion or \$597 billion is that this is over 10 years. This is a drop in the bucket compared to the military budget. It's all about priorities.

## **11:48 Comment From Ken**

Today, August 18, 2009, 50 minutes ago  
has anyone ever seen government use tax dollars solely for the purpose they instated the tax? usually those tax dollars become part of the general fund and congress gets a raise

## **11:48 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 50 minutes ago

We talk too much about "rights" The term becomes meaningless. Everything that's a good idea shouldn't be deemed a "right."

## **11:48 Comment From A**

Today, August 18, 2009, 50 minutes ago

Taxes are already way to high for average middle class family and the so called rich are not a infinite tax resource for all the current proposed increases (bailouts, cash for clunkers, etc). If the current healthcare draft passes, the middle class will get hit with additional taxes. My family already pays over 55% of our gross income in federal and state income tax, property taxes, sales tax, and other misc. taxes. Throwing money at this issue is not the answer and will hurt this country's middle class...

## **11:48 Comment From Jen G**

Today, August 18, 2009, 50 minutes ago

Yes...THANK YOU JOHN!!! If we could make less airplaines and les bombs perhaps we would be able to care for our elderly and babies!!!!

## **11:50 Comment From John Turngren**

Today, August 18, 2009, 48 minutes ago

Karol R, I agree with you that the link between health care access and employment needs to be broken. I am self-employed. Does that mean that I should pay more? People need full access to affordable health care whether or not they are employed by someone else or even if they aren't employed.

## **11:50 Comment From Wendy Haynes**

Today, August 18, 2009, 48 minutes ago

Paul, thank you for the debate, my final thoughts are for folks to be cautious about handing more power to the government. please look at their track record with monies they already have

## **11:50 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 48 minutes ago

I saw Larry Miller the other night point out that each generation has become weaker than the last one- expecting the government or someone to care for them- totally entitlement mentality. While I think that is a true obseration, health care is the one area I would add to as a "right" - and if so, the government (and taxpayers) should fund it- no matter where we have to get the money- military spending, national parks, prisions, etc.

## **11:50 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 48 minutes ago

Karol R, I agreee the government has more purchasing power, so why are we not doing some wise purchasing to save on prescription coverage? Why are we not doing NOW what Canada is doing RE: drug coverage? I see in today's paper that this is 'off the table'. We keep hearing about potential savings, but consistently do something else. Why do you think a new plan would be any different?

## **11:51 Comment From Doris Evans**

Today, August 18, 2009, 47 minutes ago

Health care for us ALL is not just a "right," it's a moral obligation of civilized society. I'm disturbed that this isn't an obvious "must do" for the United States!

## **11:51 Comment From Nancy S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 47 minutes ago

Just because we have the technology to maintain "life" does not mean that it is appropriate to use it in every instance. Many people would choose not to be artiificially sustained if it only meant pain and suffering with no change in the outcome. The patient or his advocate must be informed regarding the choices and the expected outcome. By the way, currently hospitals/doctors are not required (legally or ethically) to continue care if it is futile.

## **11:51 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 47 minutes ago

So, did we reach any kind of consensus here?

## **11:52 Comment From Stuart Schy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 46 minutes ago

Paying our taxes does everything from fixing our potholes to fighting our wars. We don't complain about paying taxes for police and fire protection, or assuring a clean water supply. If we eliminate loopholes, offshore bank accounts, and other tax dodges, we can go a long way to paying for affordable health care.

## **11:52 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 46 minutes ago

Discussiona are ideological. Implementation is pragmatic. When your take home pay shrinks to pay for all of this you will become less ideological and much more pragmatic. This is something EVERYONE is going to have to pay for and it is not going to be cheap.

## **11:52 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 46 minutes ago  
Doris, I couldn't agree more!

## **11:53 PressDemocrat**

Today, August 18, 2009, 45 minutes ago  
We're about to wrap up this virtual town hall meeting in a few minutes. Feel free to post a closing thought on the topic so it can be shared with others. Thanks for participating.

## **11:53 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 45 minutes ago  
How about you small business owners out there? The argument in favor of reform is that you would end up with a more healthy, reliable workforce if your employees are all covered. But many are inflaming fears that the cost on you will be too great.  
Fact: The vast majority of the nation's small business owners - those with 25 employees or fewer - will likely be exempted from any mandate to insure employees or pay a penalty for not doing so.

## **11:53 Comment From Robert R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 45 minutes ago  
Obviously there's much to debate and many different options to consider. So why the rush to jam it down our throats. I think we need much more study and thought . How about studying Switzerland and Japan( more private hospitals in Japan than in the US.) No question we need reform. This is going to take time and energy. This is the biggest issue this country has faced, policy wise that is, so lets get people together to study and come up with options. also lets make these drafts no more than 50 pages. You don't need a 1000+ pages.

## **11:53 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 45 minutes ago  
MAry Kinsella, your idea is a good one, but we all know part of that problem is 'cost shifting', precipitated by underfunding, uninsured patients etc.

## **11:53 Comment From Laura M**

Today, August 18, 2009, 45 minutes ago  
If I didn't have to spend so much for my health insurance premiums, I wouldn't mind shifting that money to a tax to help cover this. I'm a small business employer, and I try to provide health coverage to my employees, but with 30% annual increases (that's right - 30%) I have to keep squeezing their benefits to afford it.

## **11:53 Comment From Peter McCormick**

Today, August 18, 2009, 45 minutes ago

I pay for insurance and medicare and both our employers pay and it is for health care (not tax) that I recently received and hope to be able to receive in the future. If both my health care and the care of my neighbor or friend in in jeopardy I would be willing to pay more.

## **11:54 Jim Sweeney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 44 minutes ago

Consensus? I doubt it. But we made it through two hours without shouting each other down. Lots of good comments and viewpoints to consider. Thanks.

## **11:54 Comment From Gary Lentz**

Today, August 18, 2009, 44 minutes ago

Okay, Gretchen, then why aren't you pushing Congress to make individual purchases of health care tax deductible and available across state lines? Then you could decouple your health care from your employment, choose from any health insurer under the sun, band together with others similarly situated into private co-ops to bring down costs, and not have to worry about losing your coverage when you leave your job. QED

## **11:54 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 44 minutes ago

When a government has power over your body, they have power over your vote.

## **11:54 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 44 minutes ago

Mike Dolan: Answering your question, "We're not doing it now," not sure who "we" is -- because the electronic systems for medical records are hugely expensive and still being invented and sold by programmers trying to get into the market. Some systems are better than others but none are cheap. Getting funders to agree that investing now will create savings later is not easy.

## **11:54 Comment From Lucy Barnett**

Today, August 18, 2009, 44 minutes ago

Regarding costs, I've already talked of end of life care being so expensive so making and respecting Advanced Directives could save billions, but on the other side, what about personal responsibility? Kaiser is doing a good job on encouraging lifestyle behaviours that will prevent illness. Too bad we can't put a health care tax on every Mc

## **11:54 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 44 minutes ago

One thing I didn't see mentioned is splitting health care into basic/preventative and serious categories. These could be dealt with differently. Basic/preventative should be easily available to all.

## **11:55 Comment From Nancy S**

Today, August 18, 2009, 43 minutes ago

Good point, Nick, and it is great to see your comments here. I have wondered about the savings to office overhead. Many of the primary care physicians at my hospital have gone to Kaiser because they could not afford the billing dept. costs.

## **11:55 Comment From michael koepf**

Today, August 18, 2009, 43 minutes ago

When a government has power over your body, they have power over your vote.

## **11:55 Comment From Dorothy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 43 minutes ago

Doris - I agree with your statement too. Thank you. We must care for each other or we all suffer.

## **11:55 Comment From dawna gallagher**

Today, August 18, 2009, 43 minutes ago

Thankyou for this forum do it again

## **11:55 Comment From Joe Gaffney**

Today, August 18, 2009, 43 minutes ago

I think that the people who are infavor of repealing the Bush tax cuts as a measure to pay for the current healthcare proposal should look at their tax burden in 2000 and 2001. They may find that EVERYONE got a tax cut under Bush 1 and Bush 2. To selectively repeal those tax cuts is class warfare at its worst.

## **11:55 Comment From Mike Dolan**

Today, August 18, 2009, 43 minutes ago

Not all the uninsured are unwilling or incapable of paying the premiums. Most of my life I have been a small businessman, and although could well afford the premiums, insurance was not

available due to pre-existing conditions. Even Kaiser, who covers the rest of my family wouldn't take me. Oh and my pre-existing conditions were very minor.

## **11:55 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 43 minutes ago

Mike Dolan: With health care taking up 16% of the economy, how can you say it's "under-funded." What percentage would you consider adequate?

## **11:55 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 43 minutes ago

Even if there is no mandate for small companies to provide insurance it still makes them less competitive because some people will choose not to work for a small company because it doesn't provide health care.

## **11:55 Comment From Peter McCormick**

Today, August 18, 2009, 43 minutes ago

Thanks for not shouting. What a great group!

## **11:56 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 42 minutes ago

Mary, did you know that only one or two EMR vendors are "approved" by the government? Only Drs. using them will get tax breaks.

## **11:56 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 42 minutes ago

My husband and I ARE small business owners. I would love to be able to pay for ins. for our two employees. However with the way things are now, we can barely pay for our own coverage. I would love to see coverage for all.

## **11:56 Comment From Gretchen**

Today, August 18, 2009, 42 minutes ago

This was a great exchange of ideas and philosophies. I'm proud of my fellow Sonoma County citizens for conducting such civilized and spirited debate. I don't know if we changed any minds or hearts, but there are some things that I read from some of you that I will be researching later tonight. Thanks to Paul, Jim and the rest of the PD staff!

## **11:56 Comment From Doris Evans**

Today, August 18, 2009, 42 minutes ago  
Thanks for doing this, PressDemo!

## **11:56 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 42 minutes ago  
Good Point Jim. We should let the other media know you can exchange ideas without rage- maybe it is all working fine because people are on a computer and not face to face

## **11:56 Comment From Kathy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 42 minutes ago  
This issue affects every American. Let's continue the process, but not hastily pass a bill when Congress hasn't read it!!

## **11:56 Comment From Mary Balcerak**

Today, August 18, 2009, 42 minutes ago  
And no guns either!

## **11:56 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 42 minutes ago  
Peter McCormick: Thanks for your comments too.

## **11:57 Comment From Lee Brown**

Today, August 18, 2009, 41 minutes ago  
Michael Koepf makes a good point about if the government has power over your body, they have power over your vote. I think that is why the debate is so charged with emotion.

## **11:57 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 41 minutes ago  
The pen is mightier than the sword.

## **11:57 Comment From Brooke Clyde**

Today, August 18, 2009, 41 minutes ago  
Bye, all!

## **11:58 Comment From Richard**

Today, August 18, 2009, 40 minutes ago

Thanks for the opportunity to speak up. The PD has done what our representatives have not. We should all remember it the next time their names show up on a ballot. Personally I will send a letter to the editor to remind everyone of this when that time comes and I hope that the PD will have the character to publish it.

## **11:58 Comment From Dorothy**

Today, August 18, 2009, 40 minutes ago

I like what Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane" We need to heed his words.

## **11:58 Comment From Karol R**

Today, August 18, 2009, 40 minutes ago

CAn we send all these opinions to our representatives?

## **11:59 Paul Gullixson**

Today, August 18, 2009, 39 minutes ago

Hey everyone,

We're going to have to wrap this up. Thank you all for participating. This far exceeded our expectation. I know it was a little crazy at times, but that's what you get at a town hall meeting in which no one person holds the microphone. The benefit here is that you will be able to go back and read this discussion thread. We will have a transcript posted on [pressdemocrat.com](http://pressdemocrat.com). And if there's something you left unsaid, you will be able to add your comments at the end of the transcript.

I would just like to thank all of you, including our producer Greg Retsinas, for keeping this discussion lively, informative, and by and large, on topic.

## **12:00 Comment From Mary Kinsella**

Today, August 18, 2009, 38 minutes ago

Thanks Paul -- great discussion