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Fourteen Reasons to Demand Single Payer Instead of Chasing After a Public Option

1) The insurance-based proposals in Congress leave millions of people without health care, even when they include the public option in its most “robust” form. **Single payer gives absolutely everyone the health care they need.**

2) The insurance-based proposals continue to subject each of us to the nightmare of dealing with insurance policies. That nightmare takes away our time, energy, financial security and peace of mind. The stress it creates is probably making some of us sick. **Single payer ends the nightmare of dealing with insurance.** (Footnote 1)

3) Insurance-based proposals don’t reduce the horrendous paperwork burden on health care providers from dealing with insurance. They increase it by adding one more insurance provider. **Single payer greatly reduces doctors’ paperwork.**

4) **Single payer costs less.** It eliminates the massive expenses associated with insurance activities that have nothing to do with health: selling and maintaining policies, reviewing claims, responding to appeals, generating company profits, paying CEO salaries, etc, that eat up most of the 31 cents of every health care dollar spent on administration in our private insurance system. Single payer delivers actual health care to all people at a much lower cost than insurance-based systems which leave so many people out in the cold. It also empowers us to tackle cost excesses such as spiraling medication costs, because we can be united in demanding fairer prices from pharmaceutical companies through our government.

5) **Single payer gives us free choice of doctors.** We will go to the doctors we like and they will receive their reimbursements from the federal program. In an insurance-based system “Preferred Provider” lists limit our choices dramatically.

6) **Single payer gives us more control over our health care.** Right now, if we are not happy with our insurance company’s rules and actions, we can either call the 1-800 number or we can buy shares in the company in order to exert shareholder pressure. Anyone who’s tried the 1-800

approach knows that it is frustrating and ineffective. And few can afford to buy enough shares to have any power. In a single payer system, we have control through our elected officials.

7) Public option provisions will be watered down further during rulemakings and other executive branch processes. For-profit interests have even greater power in these than they do in the legislative process. The Obama Administration has already demonstrated a strong desire to appease those interests by negotiating with insurance/pharmaceutical companies at the White House while excluding single payer advocates from discussions altogether.

8) Even the most "robust" public option is likely to fail because it does not provide the cost savings and other benefits associated with a single payer system. Failure of the public option will then be used to proclaim that "single payer" does not work, **setting us back in the struggle for real health care reform by decades.** It does not matter that the public option, an insurance-based program within a multi-payer system, has nothing to do with single payer health care. The debate is so confused that people mistakenly believe the public option is "a sliver of single payer."

9) The public option will not morph into "single payer". It has nothing to do with single payer, and it is likely to fail as noted above. President Obama has stated unequivocally that the public option is not a Trojan Horse for single payer, and that he will make sure that will not lead to single payer. (See Obama's speech to the AMA starting at about Minute 30 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTFzVY9qyQc>)

10) We CAN pass single payer legislation. Numerous polls show that the majority of Americans, as well as the majority of doctors and nurses, want single payer. (<http://www.wpsinglepayer.org/PollResults.html>) The Democratic Party controls both houses of Congress and the White House. At least 75 Representatives have already signed onto HR 676, Conyers' single payer bill, and many others believe in it privately without yet signing on. Obama is President of the United States, and he can use his power to persuade others to support single payer, just as he used it even before being sworn in to successfully twist arms for the Wall Street bailout. **It is irrational and wrong for the President and Democratic Party leaders to insist that they can only discuss and adopt proposals that anti-health-care-as-a-right forces like. Moreover, the preemptive compromise approach has NOT led to bi-partisan support.** It has only empowered the most extreme elements of the right.

11) Rallying around the public option robs us of our most compelling arguments. Single payer makes sense morally and fiscally. By not advocating it, we lay waste our power. Single payer resonates with the demand around the U.S. that Medicare not be harmed because it will increase Medicare benefits and expand them to everyone. (Seniors will gain missing benefits and they will no longer be forced to dig into retirement savings to help their children with medical bills.) There already is majority support for single payer, and that support will build as more people hear the truth about it. With single payer on the table front and center we can talk about being able to simply go to the doctor, not having to deal with insurance anymore, free choice of doctors, eliminating waste, and much more. We can spotlight countless compelling stories comparing what happens to real people with the same medical problems in the US and in single payer countries. In contrast, the public option does not provide the advantages of single payer and it is very confusing. Since it does not enjoy the cost savings of single payer, it is hard to explain how it will be funded and how it will survive. Rallying behind the public option and not talking about single payer is hurting the movement for health care reform, not helping it.

12) "The perfect is the enemy of the good": a cliché that prevents real reform. In defense of rallying behind the public option, some offer the expression: "The perfect is the enemy of the good." But the public option is not good and it threatens to set back the health care reform movement if adopted as noted above. Just as importantly public support and Democratic control of the White House and Congress make it more than possible to pass single payer legislation now. A more apt summary of the situation would be that "accepting a bone tossed our way is the enemy of using our power to accomplish what is achievable and essential." There is no inadequate phony "solution" that cannot be dressed up and taken out on the town under the expression: the perfect is the enemy of the good. When fighting for what is right we cannot allow ourselves to be so easily knocked off balance by clichés that glorify inappropriate compromise. We should "keep our eyes on the prize."

13) Rallying behind the public option will set the wrong tone for other issues facing our country, such as war, immigration reform, etc. The "sea-change" President started the health care debate by prohibiting discussion of a majority-supported option that gives health care to all at a much lower cost than insurance-based systems which leave people out in the cold. He negotiated with the very corporations that profit from our malignant for-profit system, even as single payer advocates were arrested for simply requesting a seat at the table. If we do not express outrage at this, we might as well all hang "I love Big

Brother" signs in our front windows. **Much more is at stake here than health care.** We are making a decision as to whether there will be a progressive movement of any strength in the United States. We are making clear whether or not we will be easily silenced and whether or not we will ignore the silencing of our friends and allies. We are answering a question that bears on so many other upcoming critical debates: Will we demand real reforms or will we accept debates that begin by declaring off limits proposals that represent real reform?

14) "Yes, we can" is a movement slogan, not a campaign cliché.
Let's take it back and use our power. "Si, se puede."

STAND UP FOR SINGLE PAYER!

As the poorly framed national health care debate flounders, the single payer movement is regaining momentum. There are town hall meetings, such as the ones associated with MadasHellDoctors.com and their national Care-A-Van heading towards D.C. (September 8, 2009 is the Seattle event.) Representative Weiner and others have won a promise from Speaker Pelosi that Weiner's single payer amendment will be debated and voted on this September on the House floor. The amendment would substitute single payer (HR 676) for the insurance-based proposal that is currently moving forward.

Attend public meetings on health care and hold a Single Payer sign! Speak for single payer at those events. Write letters to the editor, contact your Representative and Senator, put up a sign in your yard. Pass on notices and alerts to your friends, families and colleagues. Yes, we can!

Two useful websites: www.pnhp.org <<http://www.pnhp.org/>> and www.unitedforsinglepayer.org <<http://www.unitedforsinglepayer.org/>>

Footnote 1: Examples of the insurance nightmare: How many more hours will it take to figure out which of these complicated plans to choose? How will I afford the deductible and/or premiums? What do you mean you won't cover the procedure because it was done on the same day as the evaluation? What do these changes to my policy mean? I guess I'll just stay up late tonight to work on the appeal for the claim they rejected. Does clause III(a)(i) mean that the procedure is covered or not? I'm so worried about my sister and her medical bills, but how can I help her and pay my own bills? Is my plan for the kids' college and my retirement sound, or will unexpected medical bills undercut all of my planning? Should I go to the specialist my trusted doctor recommended even though

she's not on in-network? Oh no, the policy I chose 6 months ago is being phased out and I need to figure out which plan to get all over again.