

# THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE DNC COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

August 20th, 2009 Edition

## What's Happening this Week?

### National Health Care Forum with President Obama!

**President Obama** came to the DNC on Thursday afternoon for a national **Health Care Forum** with OFA supporters and volunteers. During the 90 minute program – which also included Chairman Tim Kaine and DNC Vice Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-20) – the President talked about what's happening in the health reform debate in DC and around the country, before laying out our strategy and message moving forward. He then took questions from the live audience in the DNC's Wasserman Room, as well as from people who submitted questions via email and Twitter. Thousands of supporters participated in the meeting via webcast and conference call.



Photo Credit: AP

You can listen to the forum [here](#). An excerpt from President Obama's remarks is below.

"For all the chatter and the noise out there, what every American needs to know is this: If you don't have health insurance, you will finally have quality, affordable options once we pass reform. If you do have health insurance, we will make sure that no insurance company or government bureaucrat gets between you and the care you need. I don't believe anyone should be in charge of your health care decisions but you and your doctor – not government bureaucrats; not insurance companies.

"We are closer than ever, so it's not surprising that our fight is getting fiercer. History is clear on this. Whenever America has set about solving our toughest problems, there have always been those who've sought to preserve the status quo by scaring the American people. That's what happened when FDR tried to pass Social Security – they said it was "socialist." That's what happened when President Kennedy and President Johnson were working to create Medicare – they said it was a government takeover of health care that would stick folks between you and your doctor.

"Sound familiar? What these struggles have always boiled down to is a contest between hope and fear. And in the coming weeks, the cynics and the naysayers will do or say almost anything to defend an indefensible status quo, and stoke fear to score political points rather than solve our urgent problems.

"But this is bigger than politics. This is about people's lives. This is about people's businesses. This is about America's future, and whether we will be able to look back years from now and say that this was the moment when we lived up to our responsibility to meet the challenges of our time and expand the promise of this country for ourselves, for one another, and for our children.

"So if you want that brighter future, I need your help. You've been with me before, and I need you again. I need you to stand for change. I need you to stand for hope. I need you to show your support by attending a health reform event in your community over the next few weeks, or by hosting one of your own. I need you to roll up your sleeves, knock on doors, and spread the word about reform, because we are going to move this country forward and get this done this year. Thank you."

**President Obama joins “40 Minutes for Health Reform” with Progressive Faith Organizations.** President Obama participated in a nationwide call-in and audio webcast on health care reform with America’s faith leaders on August 19th. The President called health insurance coverage for all Americans a “core ethical and moral obligation,” and disputed claims that Democratic bills would fund abortions, give benefits to illegal immigrants, or create “death panels” that would decide who gets expensive end-of-life treatment. He said, “I know that there’s been a lot of misinformation in this debate and there are some folks out there who are, frankly, bearing false witness, I need you to spread the facts and speak the truth.” The webcast was organized by [Faith in Public Life](#), a strategy center sponsored by more than 30 religious denominations and organizations.

**President Obama speaks at the VFW Convention.** President Obama spoke to a crowd of about 5,500 at the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention on Monday afternoon in Phoenix, Arizona. In his speech, he talked about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, criticized wasteful military spending and touched briefly on health insurance reform. Click [here](#) to read the President’s full remarks, an excerpt is below:

“Whether you’ve left the service in 2009 or 1949, we will fulfill our responsibility to deliver the benefits and care that you earned. And that’s why I’ve pledged to build nothing less than a 21st-century VA. And I picked a lifelong soldier and wounded warrior from Vietnam to lead this fight, General Shinseki.

“We’re dramatically increasing funding for veterans health care. This includes hundreds of millions of dollars to serve veterans in rural areas, as well as the unique needs of our growing number of women veterans. We’re restoring access to VA health care for a half-million veterans who lost their eligibility in recent years -- our Priority 8 veterans.

“And since there’s been so much misinformation out there about health insurance reform, let me say this: One thing that reform won’t change is veterans’ health care. No one is going to take away your benefits -- that is the plain and simple truth. We’re expanding access to your health care, not reducing it.”

**Conference Call with Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer on Recovery Act Success.** Last Monday marked six months since President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, landmark legislation that rescued our economy from the brink of catastrophe. Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer participated in a press conference call with the DNC on Wednesday to talk about the success of the Recovery Act in Montana, and to fight back against the lies – spread to Republicans in Montana and Washington, DC – about the Act’s results. You can listen to the full call [here](#). Here’s a quote from Governor Schweitzer:

“These recovery dollars are used in a great way in Montana for really making the highways safer so that when you or your spouse or your children are traveling to work or school you don’t have to worry about a bridge collapsing, or having a traffic light that is not repaired break down and create some problems. It makes the drinking water safer... our waste water systems healthier... and our state buildings and our schools more energy efficient, so that it will cost us less money to run our state in future years and it will decrease our dependence on foreign oil.

“If you’re traveling across Montana, I will guaren-dang-tee ya that you’re gonna be stopped along the way and there will be people in hard hats driving big yellow tractors, pushing dirt around, fixing bridges, building bridges, repairing roads, making our highways safer. If you are traveling to Montana during this summer season, you’ll find construction crews working in many of our schools, making them more energy efficient. More than a thousand people are already working in Montana.”

## [Organizing for America](#)



### **Let’s Get It Done: Health Insurance Reform Now Events.**

With August recess winding down, members of Congress are preparing to head back to Washington, DC. Before they go, OFA supporters and volunteers are communicating one simple message: **Let’s get it done.** Over the next few weeks, OFA to keep organizing local events, keep reaching out members of Congress, and keep building organization by training volunteers leaders to be effective community organizers to demonstrate the strong public support for health insurance reform. [Sign up](#) for an event in your community.

**Supporters of Reform Outnumber Critics at Town Halls.** Last week, newspapers and cable television were filled with stories of angry protestors - organized by right wing special interest-backed groups – railing against reform. What a difference a week can make. Now, supporters of reform are outnumbering the critics at many town halls around the country.



Organizing for America has never been about the confrontational, attention-grabbing and disrespectful activities defenders of the status quo have chosen to employ. It's not that our folks weren't at those early town halls – we were – it was just harder to hear us above the fray. OFA's meticulous, focused, person-to-person, block-by-block approach that successfully engaged millions of Americans in the political process and sent Barack Obama to the White House, is building strong grassroots support for passing health insurance reform this year.

Here are a few examples of civil town hall events that have taken place over the past several days:

[Huffington Post](#). **"Reform Supporters Outnumber Critics at Town Halls"** by Rachel Weiner. "While television cameras have focused on vocal opponents to health care reform, in many cases they have been outnumbered by supporters of the legislation in general and a public option in particular. In Phoenix, Arizona, Pro-Obama demonstrators appeared to outnumber the anti-Obama ones, with Phoenix police estimating the crowd at 1,200 to 2,000 at locations around the convention center." In Boulder, Colorado, "a few hundred residents of one of the nation's more liberal congressional districts turned out Monday night to tell their congressman, Democratic Rep. Jared Polis, to keep the public option, however controversial politically, in the final bill."

[Sumter Item](#). **"Health Care Reform"** by Gina Vasselli. Town hall meetings on health care reform across the nation have become infamous for shouting, shoving and shrill voices. But at the Sumter County Library on Monday night, there was none of that, not even a disagreement.

[Star-Telegram](#). **"Legislators' Dallas healthcare forum is mostly peaceful"** by Alex Branch. While a crowd of demonstrators waved signs outside, Reps. Pete Sessions and Eddie Bernice Johnson offered contrasting visions of healthcare reform at a mostly peaceful Dallas forum Monday morning. Sessions, a Republican, declared a public healthcare option "socialized medicine" while Johnson, a Democrat, called it a necessary cure for a broken system. "If we didn't need it, we wouldn't be talking right now," said Johnson, citing the rising cost of healthcare premiums. "We have a moral obligation to ensure universal access."

### [Key Issues in the News & Background](#)

#### **Talking Points: Lowering Costs and Increasing Choice in the Health Insurance Market**

- There was a lot of back and forth this weekend about the public option and where it stands as part of the health reform debate. Here's the bottom line: nothing has changed.
- The President has always said that what's essential about health insurance reform is that it must lower costs, ensure all Americans have affordable health insurance options and increase choice and competition in the health insurance market.
- President Obama believes the public option is the best way to achieve those goals. The President has always said he is open to other good ideas, but at this point the public option seems like the best way to lower costs and increase choice and competition. Valerie Jarret, one of the President's senior advisors, reiterated that on Saturday at a public event.

#### **President Obama is Hearing from Everyday Americans**

- Over the past week, President Obama has been in New Hampshire, Montana and Colorado for town hall meetings. He's heard from everyday Americans who are struggling with rising health care costs, exorbitant out-of-pocket fees, denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions and people whose coverage had been dropped after they became sick.
- Americans in every corner of the country are held hostage at any given moment by health insurance companies that deny coverage, drop coverage or charge outrageous fees that people can't afford, just at the time when they need care the most.
- Our current system is bankrupting families and bankrupting businesses. And we are going to fix it when we pass health insurance reform this year.
- Under the reform President Obama is proposing, insurance companies will be prohibited from denying coverage because of a person's medical history. They will not be able to drop coverage if someone gets sick, or water down coverage when people need it the most.
- Insurance companies will also be banned from charging exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses for things like co-pays and deductibles, or capping the amount of coverage someone is able to receive. And they will have to fully cover – without charge – regular checkups and tests that help people prevent illness, such as mammograms or eye and foot exams for diabetics.

Paid for and authorized by the Democratic National Committee, [www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org). This communication is not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.