



## PA Guide for Health Care Activists

### How to Respond to Opponents of Health Care Reform

#### The Opposition Strategy

1. **Look much bigger than they** are by using disruptive tactics at public meetings.
2. Use these tactics and false charges against the health care reform bill to **divert attention from the real issues** that are critical to the American people: the cost of health care and security of access to health care

#### Our Strategy

1. **Keep your eyes on the prize:** We don't need to convince the right wing to support health care. Our focus is on members of Congress and the people in the middle who have not made up their mind. Always think about to convince **them**
2. **Get out in force and make your presence felt.** We do need to show people there is a real, grass-roots movement for reform. So need to be at public events early and in large numbers. Everyone should have a sticker and, if allowed, a poster / sign. We need to get a lot of people up front and then spread out in the room. We need to raise our hand or stand in line to ask questions quickly. And if we need to make some noise before and after the event: two chants are particularly helpful: *Health Care Now* and *Yes We Can*.
3. **Focus on our message in public:** we don't want to engage with the crazy arguments used by the opposition in public. Instead our only direct response should be: you are trying to divert attention from what Americans really care about.....and then go onto our message
4. **Circulate our Truth and Lies document** to members of Congress and the press after the event. This document will show them that how far off-base the other side is.
5. **Be passionate but calm:** It works to our advantage if we look reasonable and well informed while the other side looks like a bunch of lunatics who make wild, uniformed charges, who are afraid to engage in debate about the important, and who are disruptive. Don't be disruptive yourself and don't get into arguments with them on their issues.
6. **Demand respect for democratic debate.** If the other side continually disrupts the proceedings, at the signal of your leader, everyone on our side should stand up quietly. Have the leader tell the person running the meeting that you are there to learn from one another and that the disruptive tactics are ruining that. Demand that everyone in the room have respect for one another. Prepare some signs in advance that say: **Respect democracy** or **Debate Not Mob Rule**.
7. **Ask questions that show what we want to achieve.** Remember that we have to use this public event to build support for health care reform. So ask questions that will do that, that is, that show what the legislation will achieve. Here are some examples:
  - "Many people have suffered because insurance companies deny people health insurance or charge them exorbitant amounts because they have a pre-existing medical condition. Will the health care bill address that issue and if so will you support it?"

- “Health care is hard to afford for small businesses or individuals. I’ve heard the bill provides subsidies for middle class and small businesses. Is that true and do you support them?”
- “Health insurance is very expensive. Will you support a public health insurance plan create competition and drive down costs?”
- “I like my health insurance, although it is costly. Can I keep it under the President’s plan? Will subsidies for the middle class and competition from the public insurance plan make it cheaper for me?”

## Our Message

### 1. The need for reform this year:

- Health care costs going up 3x faster than inflation making insurance too expensive for more and more people in the middle class;
- Businesses are asking employees to pay higher premiums and more out of pocket. Many are dropping insurance entirely
- Insurance companies use unfair rules and fine print to deny people the care they need. People are denied coverage if they have pre-existing medical conditions or are older. They are dropped from coverage when they need it.

2. President Obama and Congress are supporting **a reasonable, middle of the road uniquely American plan to guarantee that we all have quality, affordable health care.** (The ideals that appeal most to people are in bold.)

- **Security and Choice:** Keep the insurance you have if you like it.
- **Security:** Insurers won’t be able to deny you care for an illness you had years ago, a preexisting problem, or because of your age.
- **Security** Health care reform will give you stable and secure private coverage that cannot be taken away and the public health insurance plan provides a backup.
- **Affordability:** credits for the middle class and competition from the public health insurance plan will reduce insurance costs, Our paychecks won’t be eroded by health care costs.
- **No new taxes:** the plan is paid for by reducing waste, inefficiency and fraud and by raising taxes only on families making \$400,000 a year or more

## The Counter Attack

1. The opposition is mostly political: Some in Washington will do anything to kill reform. Their only priority is scoring.
2. The opposition has offered not alternatives that deal with the problems we know we have.
3. The right wing opponents is deliberately being misinformed by conservative ideologues being paid by insurance company interests.