



Missourians for Single Payer Health Care

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MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Julia E. Lamborn-Gettinger

It is with pleasure that I invite you to attend our **5th Annual Health Care Weekend**. You will find more information on the scheduled events throughout this newsletter.

Last year Missouri cut almost 100,000 people from Medicaid. Budgets for other health services were cut. Medicaid is officially scheduled to end in June 2008. Missouri is the first state to schedule this. We are being watched by the nation to see if this will work. If it does, others will want to follow suit. Current political trends are to privatize all aspects of health care. This will leave thousands to scramble for health care. In Missouri dangerous choices are being presented as the replacement for Medicaid. Safety nets will be destroyed.

This year MoSP is highlighting Missouri's plight. As the nation watches Missouri, we feel that MoSP should be the voice for truth and change. Missourians need to know what is happening IN and TO Missouri.

Dr. Fred Rottnek is a local hero and a man of the people. He works in the trenches daily. No one is more familiar with health care injustices in MO. He knows that health insurance is not health care. **Please plan to be in attendance when Dr. Rottnek speaks at the Ethical Society** (9001 Clayton Road, St. Louis, MO 63117) on Sunday, March 25, 11:00 a.m. His address: "Patriotism, Public Health and Health Care." You are invited to a reception following the program. Please check through the newsletter for other events.



Learn more about featured speaker Dr. Fred Rottnek on page 2.

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Dr. Fred Rottnek To Give Health Care Lecture Sunday Mar. 25 He Will Give His Views from the “Trenches” of Health Care

Dr. Fred Rottnek, who oversees care of thousands of St. Louis County prisoners and also finds time to treat homeless patients, will give this year’s annual Sunday Health Care Lecture at 11 a.m., March 25, at The Ethical Society of St. Louis, 9001 Clayton Rd.

The topic of Dr. Rottnek’s annual Sunday Health Care Lecture is “Patriotism and Public Health and Health Care.” He differs from recent speakers because he works each day in the frontline “trenches” of health care at the St. Louis County Health Department and as a physician for the homeless at a non-profit religious institute.

He is chief physician in corrections medicine for all of St. Louis County. He also treats residents in homeless shelters under the auspices of the St. Aquinas Institute. Dr. Rottnek’s talk is sponsored by the Ethical Society and MoSP.

Dr. Rottnek knows statistics on the plummeting status in health care. In Missouri, the state has become the first in the nation to drop Medicaid. The state already ranks next to last among all states. He said the emphasis of his lecture will be about **why** our nation - Missouri in particular – has allowed its health care system to decline so badly.

Political leaders frame debates in their version of “patriotism,” he said: Huge defense budgets are patriotic, for example. So are multi-billion-dollar contracts to firms such as Halliburton. A healthier form of patriotism, however, may be to provide health care for all Americans and to rebuild the nation’s public health network, he said.

His talk will explore other aspects of patriotism. Is it “patriotic,” he asks, for nearly a million Missourians and 50 million Americans unable to afford health insurance? Most other democracies spend much less on health care but key health indicators show these nations have healthier citizens.

“Access to health care is vital to maintain the common good - but having millions of sick people without access to care doesn’t make for great public order,” Dr.Rottnek said during a public discussion last year.

Dr.Rottnek is director of Community Services at the Institute for Research and Education in Family Medicine, of which he’s a founding physician. Dr.Rottnek also coordinates care for up to 50 patients in an evening at area homeless shelters.

–By Roger Signor, program chair, MoSP



VOICE OF THE DAY: Universal health care is the only right answer

What do George Bush, Hillary Clinton, Claire McCaskill, George Will, and Tony Messenger have in common? Each dismisses a single-payer national health system as a solution to the failed private insurance system and offers poor alternatives. Space allows only brief comments:

Bush's tax code plan will only help 2-4 million of the 47.5 million uninsured get covered with poor quality policies. Among other problems, it will not help low-income people or those with "pre-existing" conditions; it will further erode the already crumbling employer-based system; and, because of its funding plan, will damage the existing public system.

Hillary Clinton, as reported by the *Washington Post*, took a vote in an Iowa town meeting about what type of health system people wanted. A large majority chose national health care. She replied there wasn't enough political support. Let me understand ... a large majority wanted it, but there is no support? Numerous polls show majorities of Americans want universal coverage as long as choice of providers is assured. Such a system is the substance of HR 676, a bill in Congress that would universalize Medicare.

Claire McCaskill is interested in the Massachusetts law that requires everyone to buy insurance in the private market. But the details of that policy have been heavily criticized for a variety of reasons: It does nothing to control costs, it is a windfall for insurance companies, it is a further shift of costs onto labor, the numbers don't add up, and more.

George Will argues conservatives want more individual responsibility and that forcing people out of the employer-based system into the private market was the best approach. He observed it costs \$1,500 more to produce a car in Detroit than in Canada because of health care costs. What he neglected to add was Canada has national health insurance.

Tony Messenger, a committed libertarian, wants patients to directly negotiate with providers. Mr. Messenger apparently is unaware that the insurance system came into being because private arrangements such as he favors led to insupportable inequities and inefficiencies.

In all these cases, there is a failure of political and opinion leadership, making meaningful reform unlikely. You will again hear objections to national insurance. While I don't have the space to refute them all, just remember this empirical reality: America is the only developed country lacking universal health care, which causes a great deal of personal, social, and economic suffering.

—By Ira Edelman

(reprinted from The Springfield (MO) News-Leader)

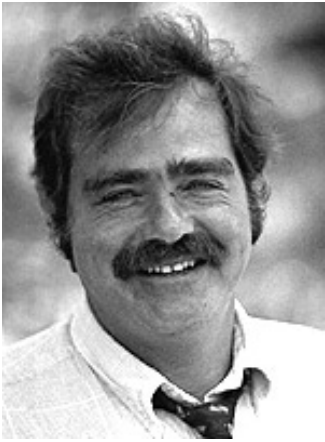
Missourians Testify for the Missouri Universal Health Assurance Act

A group of citizens presented written and verbal testimony in support of SB122, The "Missouri Universal Health Assurance Act" before the Senate Health and Mental Health Committee at the state capitol in Jefferson City on January 30. SB122, sponsored by Senators Joan Bray and Rita Days, is the state single payer bill.

Contact the Health and Mental Health Committee to urge them to vote the bill out of committee for debate before the full Senate. The committee chair is Chuck Purgason, vice-chair is Charlie Shields, with members Mike Gibbons, Harry Kennedy and Wes Shoemeyer.

Please thank the following citizens who testified: Myrna Fichtenbaum for OWL, Jim Trout, Jeanne Kirkton, Arlene and Herb Nickels, Mimi Signor, Julia Lamborn, Esther and Jim Clark, Lindy Hern, Melanie Shouse, Pat McHugh, Terri Williams, Lee and Reita Kraemer, James Hoggard, Barbara Ross, Bob Recht.

Bill McClellan Post-Dispatch Columnist and Author Is MoSP's Speaker at 7 p.m., May 15 at Ethical Society



Bill McClellan, columnist at the Post-Dispatch for 20 years, writes about sick people who've "begged, borrowed or stolen" to get costly life-saving medical care. He usually sides with underdogs — and exposes those who bully them.

McClellan will refer to these and similar columns in his talk, "Beg, Borrow or Steal." The talk will be given on Tuesday, May 15, 7 pm at The Ethical Society of St. Louis, 9001 Clayton Rd. at MoSP's last bi-monthly meeting until fall.

As medical reporter until 1995, I sat next to Bill. I marveled at his compassion for the downtrodden. He has interviewed prisoners, judges, witches, CEOs and town characters. His informality helps strangers relax. So does his "Colombo" persona: loose-fitting coats and loud outfits. All of which disguise his sharp mind, objectivity and street smarts.

Bill grew up in Chicago. After dropping out of college, he was drafted, and served a year as combat correspondent in Vietnam. In 1980 he joined the Post-Dispatch. He landed a tough beat, night police reporter in the city. In three years, he competed with feature-writing stars to write columns.

After the try-out, Bill said, "Well, even if I don't get the job, I still have the best beat on the paper!" But he got the job. He thrived under the high-pressure of ongoing deadlines. The bravery of ordinary people inspired him.

For years, Bill's been a regular panelist on Channel 9's popular discussion show, "Donnybrook." He also gives talks before several civic groups, although he admits that public speaking isn't his favorite pastime.

In 2003, however, he gave St. Louis University's Commencement Address before 1,700 graduates. He got the honor after he wrote of the poor reputation of the university's first choice. He'd joked about unlikely successors, including himself. The school challenged Bill to give the address, with an honorary degree!

He told the graduates: "The people on the A-List (for speaker) already have degrees. I don't. This will be the first degree I have ever received. This is my commencement, too. I wish we had a more distinguished speaker."

A collection of his columns, "Through the Glass Darkly" (hardcover) was published in 2006. He is also author of the book, "Evidence of Murder."

—By Roger Signor, program chair, MoSP

Volunteers Needed!

MOSP needs your help at MOSP Welcome Tables at the **Danielle Hotel Saturday evening March 24**, and at the **Ethical Society Sunday morning March 25**.

To volunteer, call Esther Clark: 314-416-0366. Due to security problems at past events, solicitation of materials not approved in advance by the MOSP board of directors will not be permitted.

Missouri House and Senate Resolutions Support H.R. 676

Resolutions have been filed in our capitol endorsing **H.R. 676, “Expanded and Improved Medicare for All”**, Congressman Conyers’ federal universal single payer health care bill. **HCR 23**, sponsored by Rep. Jeanette Mott Oxford, has twenty-six House cosponsors: Schieffer, Casey, Norr, Nasheed, Walsh, Roorda, Bowman, Chappelle-Nadal, Meadows, Aull, Wright Jones, Wildberger, Brown (50), Frame, Daus, Corcoran, Talboy, Hubbard, George, Shively, Darrough, Shoemehl, Lowe, Young, Burnett, and Yaeger. **SCR 23**, sponsored by Senator Joan Bray, has six cosponsors: Senators Days, Coleman, Smith, Green, Justus, and McKenna. Send a personal letter of thanks to these progressive lawmakers who have cosigned the resolutions for national universal health care.

—Mimi Signor, RN

Labor Unions Endorse National Health Care Bill Reintroduced by Conyers, Kucinich

More than 200 labor union organizations across the country are backing a proposal by Reps. John Conyers (D-Mich.) and Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) to establish a national health care program guaranteeing coverage to every American, the All Unions Committee for Single Payer Health Care announced Jan. 25.

The committee’s goal is to garner endorsements for the bill from 1,000 local unions and labor groups. So far, 225 local unions, central labor councils, state federations, and other union groups have backed the bill.

The California Nurses Association and the Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) promoted the legislation at a press event in Washington Jan. 24. Later that day, Conyers reintroduced the legislation with the same bill number as the national health care bill he sponsored in 2005 (H.R. 676).

The legislation seeks to move away from private, employer-sponsored health care plans to a single payer system. The national health care program envisioned in the bill would be modeled after the Medicare program and would extend benefits to all U.S. residents and those living in U.S. territories, according to a bill summary. The conversion to a not-for-profit system would take place over a 15-year period.

“My plan... guarantees every resident of the United States access to a full range of medically necessary services,” Conyers said in a statement Jan. 24.

No co-pays or deductibles would be paid under the bill, and patients would have their choice of physicians, providers, hospitals, clinics, and practices.

The program would be partly paid for through a “modest” payroll tax on employers and on workers of 3.3 percent each. Other sources of program revenue would come from taxes on the wealthy and taxes on stocks and bonds, and by closing corporate tax shelter loopholes and repealing the Bush tax cut of 2001 for the highest income earners, the bill summary said.

The bill sponsors contend that their government-run health insurance system could reduce the nearly \$2 trillion in annual health care expenditures in the United States, providing more than \$286 billion a year in total health care costs.

But critics of government-run health care, such as the National Association of Manufacturers, contend that such programs are expensive to administer, consume massive amounts of taxes, and lead to rationing of health services and reduced quality of care. NAM spokesman Hank Cox said, “There are many things our government can do to help improve the quality and reduce the cost of health care, and to expand insurance coverage, but it would be a mistake to abandon our primary reliance on the private sector to provide quality health care to our citizens.”

CNA President Deborah Burger told BNA her 75,000-member union would back candidates in the 2008 election that favor a national health care system. She said the current health care system has “no real competition” to hold down costs.

MoSP Labor/Citizen Coalition Celebrates HR 676



Ed Finkelstein

MOSP's Annual Health Care Weekend begins with MOSP's Labor/Citizen Coalition's celebration of **H.R. 676, Expanded and Improved Medicare for All** at a rally on **Saturday** evening, **March 24** at 7:30-10:00 PM at the **Danielle Hotel**, Marquis Room, 216 N. Meramec Avenue in Clayton. **Ed Finkelstein**, publisher of *The Labor Tribune*, will give a rousing Keynote Address at 8:30 PM. Progressive leaders in the Missouri House and Senate, sponsors and cosponsors of Concurrent Resolutions to Endorse H.R. 676, will be our honored guests. This rally is free to individual and organizational members of MOSP. RSVP to Esther Clark: 314-416-0366.

H.R. 676 is the national universal single payer health care bill sponsored by Michigan Congressman John Conyers with fifty-nine congressional cosponsors, including the Honorable U. S. Representative Lacy Clay. H.R. 676 is endorsed by: the Missouri AFL-CIO; the St. Louis Labor Council; the St. Louis Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO; Southeast Missouri Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO; Sheet Metal Workers Local 36 and Communication Workers of America Local 6355 (Missouri State Workers Union).

Health care must be established as a right for all of us as the law of our land.

—Mimi Signor, RN

Kentucky House Urges Congress to Enact HR 676, Single Payer Health Plan

On February 7 the House of Representatives of the Kentucky General Assembly passed a resolution calling on the U.S. Congress to enact HR 676, the National Health Insurance Act. HR 676 introduced by Congressman John Conyers would implement a single payer plan to provide health insurance coverage to everyone in our country.

While support for a single payer system (government-funded, privately delivered) is growing nationwide, Kentucky is the first state to issue such a strong endorsement.

By voice vote without dissent the Kentucky House of Representatives adopted HR 81, sponsored by Representative Joni L. Jenkins (D-44th, Jefferson County). The resolution directs the House Clerk to send a copy of the official document to all six members of the Kentucky Congressional delegation as well as to President Bush.

In the 2006 session, a similar resolution was reported favorably out of the Health and Welfare Committee — with bipartisan support. Seventeen legislators joined Rep. Jenkins as co-sponsors, but the resolution did not come before the full House for a vote.

In Kentucky approximately 582,000 people lack health insurance, and the state has raised fees in its Medicaid program despite making extensive overall cuts in benefits. Resolution 81 cites a 2003 Harvard University study which found that the state spent roughly 4 billion dollars on unnecessary bureaucracy, an amount more than enough to provide coverage to all of Kentucky's uninsured and to improve care for those now covered.

The full text of HR 81 is on line at <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/07RS/HR81.htm>

Representative Joni Jenkins can be reached at **(502) 550-3604**.

MoSP Donations & Memberships

It's time to talk about contributions again. I really don't like to talk about money, but it seems to be a necessary part of life. Missourians for Single Payer is an all volunteer grass roots organization. No officer or volunteer gets paid for any of the time, effort or travel done for MoSP. In fact, most volunteers don't even turn in mileage, phone bills, copy receipts, stamps, etc. We have the most dedicated people in MoSP! To my knowledge, MoSP is the only advocacy organization in Missouri that is working for a single payer plan by state or on the national level. Others are recommending some form of insurance for all. We all know that insurance is not health care.

MoSP has not received large grants from rich foundations. MoSP is financed by your generous contributions and yearly memberships. We truly are the grass roots voice for health care for all. It is now time to renew your memberships and if you can make a special contribution it will be put to good use. This income pays for newsletters, special mailings, printing, securing guest speakers, and other necessary expenses. We try to keep our membership dues low so that no one will be left out.

Please send your membership dues and contributions to MoSP, 438 N. Skinker, St. Louis, MO 63130. Individual membership: \$20.00. Family membership: \$30.00. Organizational Membership: \$50.00. Thank you.

—Julia Lamborn



**Letter to editor, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*,
March 7, 2007**

Supporting Donor Profits

Thanks to the St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Society for boycotting an event attended by Gov. Matt Blunt and featuring Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt ("Medical Group Boycotts Leavitt, Blunt...", Mar. 2).

Better still, the society should support the national health insurance program, House Resolution 676. Politicians support private health insurance companies' profit plans and show no concern for the 47 million Americans without health insurance. Only U.S. Rep. Lacy Clay, D-St. Louis, of all our area congressmen, supports the bill. Do others think only of their financial support from insurance companies?"

Eugene P. Schwartz/Clayton

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_____ I'm unable to pay dues at this time, but I will support and promote MoSP among relatives, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, however I can. Please continue to send me the newsletter. Please call on me for volunteer help.