



# Missourians for Single Payer Health Care

438 N. Skinker Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63130 ~ Ph: 314.862.5735 ~ www.mosp.us

## MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

**Julia E. Lamborn-Gettinger**

As 2007 quickly passes and 2008 lurks just around the corner, I know we are all very busy with celebrations and end of year events. For New Year's resolutions I would hope that we can all renew our spirit for achieving Medicare for All. **2008 is an election year. Health care activists have an excellent opportunity to demand change and forge ahead for health care for all through single payer.** This is our chance! If we don't seize it, we won't get it! MoSP has exciting programs planned for the new year and looks forward to your participation and help. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to All!



## How We Remember Hy Blumenthal

With the death of Hy Blumenthal, 94, on Nov. 4, we mourn the loss of our friend, a brilliant advocate for single payer health care. He abhorred insurance companies, while touting basic Medicare as our country's great single payer program. He was an active member of Health Care is a Human Right and Physicians for a National Health Program.

Although a busy physician-teacher-researcher, he always found time to help. In meetings of MoSP's legislative committee Hy argued for profound improvements to MoSP's state single payer bill, the Missouri Universal Health Assurance Act, replacing employer-based funding with a fair, progressive income tax.

Over the decades he was the bane of politicians who kept cutting public health care, clinics and hospitals. His residence in University City became a rallying point to plan protests against the closing of St. Louis Regional Hospital, the last of four, local public hospitals.

*By Roger & Mimi Signor*

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*Sylvester Brown to speak on  
January 3; turn to page 2.*



*SiCKO's Donna Smith To  
Give Health Care Weekend  
Address. See page 4.*

# Sylvester Brown to Speak on Race & Health Care At MoSP's Thursday, January 3, Meeting

Award-winning columnist Sylvester Brown of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch will be the speaker at MoSP's meeting on Thursday, Jan. 3, at 6:30 p.m. in the Hanke auditorium of the Ethical Society of St. Louis, 9001 Clayton Rd.

Brown will discuss the St. Louis's long history of limited access to health care for urban black residents, as well as area citizens who lack insurance.

Race is a frequent theme of Brown's thrice-weekly columns. He's written on many facets of race, from heavy-handed treatment of black motorists by suburban police, to Mayor Francis Slay having recently fired St. Louis's first African American fire chief.

Brown usually writes about ordinary or little known people. One exception was when Brown locked horns with controversial Bill O'Reilly on the Fox Network. O'Reilly denied he'd called Sen. Barbara Boxer "a nut," as Brown had once written in a column. But Brown proved O'Reilly had indeed made the remark. Even so, O'Reilly declined to fulfill his bet that – if Brown proved him wrong – he would take him to dinner at Tony's.

For 15 years before Brown joined the Post-Dispatch, he and his wife, Victoria, published *Take Five*, a regional publication which won 35 awards for its investigative series, news reports and social commentary. For his Post-Dispatch columns in 2005 he received "The Terry Hughes Writing Award." His col-



umns have also earned him the "Best Columns" and "Best Series" awards from the St. Louis Association of Black Journalists.

He's also been a guest on Air America's *Al Franken Show*, Public Radio International's *The Tavis Smiley Show* and in 2005 he was featured with Bill Cosby on ABC's *Nightline*. He's given his views on the popular *St. Louis on the Air*, on KWMU-FM, the St. Louis area's public radio outlet.

Sylvester and Victoria Brown live in the city of St. Louis.

*by Roger Signor*

## **Carnahan Spurns Single Payer Coalition By Mimi Signor, RN**

Constituents of Congressman Russ Carnahan have been requesting a face-to-face meeting to ask him to join the Congressional Universal Health Care Task Force and sign on as a cosponsor of HR 676, Congressman Conyers universal single payer health care bill. After nearly weekly calls since January of 2007, Suzanne Archer, his scheduler announced to me that he will not meet with us at all this year. Events to date:

February 28, 2007: Twenty-two constituents met with his aide, Anna Jinkerson at his local office. Ms. Jinkerson said she would communicate our discussion about HR 676 with Congressman Carnahan. We asked that Carnahan talk with Congressman Conyers about health care.

April 14, 2007: Myrna Fichtenbaum, Melanie Shouse and I asked Carnahan to meet with our group about single payer and HR 676 during a forum at the United Way. He agreed to it within "a few weeks" publicly, but his scheduler denied his availability.

August 29, 2007: Myrna Fichtenbaum joined other health care advocates at a press conference called by Carnahan. Myrna spoke persuasively on HR 676, but Carnahan did not respond.

September 18, 2007: Sixteen constituents met at the local congressional office for a videoconference with Congressman Carnahan. Carnahan gave a ten-minute speech on CHIPS and small business insurance and then left for a House vote. He did not return to hear what we had to say.

In a Democracy, there is no excuse to treat good citizens poorly. We have acted responsibly and respectfully towards Congressman Carnahan, but he has not behaved in like manner. Elected to represent our interests, he must hear and consider what we have to

say. Therefore, demonstrations by a coalition of his constituents at Carnahan's local congressional office at 8764 Manchester Road are being arranged. Details will be on the MOSP website at [www.mosp.us](http://www.mosp.us).

### **Hi fellow Single Payer enthusiasts!**

I just wanted to let you know that I had my first *Sicko* movie night at the University of Missouri - Columbia. I invited my Introduction to Sociology class and asked them to invite guests. This was an occasion for them to learn more about the health care system and also to have fun together at the end of the semester. Professors from other Sociology classes also encouraged their classes to attend. We were in a 400 person auditorium and it was almost full! 325 of the attendees were my students and their guests and the rest were from other classes. What a great turnout!! A few students have approached me since then because they are interested in supporting health care reform and Single Payer. I gave them all information about MoSP and HR 676 (MoSP fliers) after the show, and will, in the future, meet with those who have further interest one on one or in small groups. Hopefully some of them will pan out and possibly a student chapter will begin supporting the movement here in Columbia.

Also, two days before the *Sicko* movie night - Mimi Signor gave a lecture to my class about health care reform and specifically talked about Single Payer and HR 676. I think this really prepared them to see the film and leave with a goal in mind. Thanks so much to her and to Julia who have been giving lectures to my classes every semester. Happy Holidays!

*by Lindy Hern*

## ***SiCKO* Star Donna Smith — National Patient Advocate— To Give Health Care Weekend Address, Sunday, April 20**



Donna Smith of Aurora, Colorado, co-star of the movie *SiCKO* and founder of American Patients for Universal Health Care, will give MoSP's Seventh Health Care

Weekend address, **11 a.m., Sunday, April 20, 2008.**

The annual Platform Lecture will be at 11 a.m. in the Ethical Society of St. Louis's main auditorium, 9001 Clayton Rd. On April 19, *SiCKO* will be shown at 7:30 p.m., also at the Society. Mrs. Smith has become one of the nation's most eloquent advocates for single payer health care.

At the film showing, Donna Smith and her husband, Larry will describe the making of the movie and its impact. Larry Smith also appears in *SiCKO*.

*SiCKO* documents their struggles with life-threatening illnesses — and private insurers. It also exposes the myth of “full insurance coverage.”

After years of mounting debts from big deductibles, co-pays and other expenses, the couple filed for bankruptcy in 2006. Among other treatments, Mr. Smith had undergone several heart surgeries; then Donna Smith, 54, had to undergo surgery for early stage uterine cancer.

Their luck and insurance ran out. They had to sell their home in South Dakota. Unable to do heavy

lifting, Mr. Smith lost his skilled, well-paying machinist job. They moved into their daughter's home in Colorado. To do so, Mrs. Smith had to quit her editor's job in South Dakota. The couple felt humiliated. But they fought back. Now Mrs. Smith works fulltime and Larry Smith has a part-time job. They've moved into their own apartment.

One night early in 2006, Mrs. Smith impulsively “fired off a terse reply” to Michael Moore who wanted families with medical horror stories to film *SICKO*. The Smiths were among 12 families selected from many thousands who had volunteered. Moore wrote, directed and narrated the film — his most acclaimed documentary so far.

His lens captures how denials of care and huge debts harmed and demoralized the 12 families— despite their “full coverage” for serious illness. About 250 million Americans are insured; 50 million more citizens are not.

Mass media calls attention to the plight of the uninsured. Moore's enlightening film gives the health care crisis a broader perspective.

*SiCKO* is peppered with Moore's barbed humor. With melodramatic flourish, he takes a boat to the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo, Cuba. With him were eight, Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> volunteer rescue workers — denied care for respiratory problems. Mrs. Smith accompanied them. Using a bullhorn from offshore, Moore vainly asked for “equal health care” for his sick passengers at the base's well-staffed medical clinic used for suspected terrorists.

Donna Smith was inspired by Moore and by meeting many others crushed in this nation's for-profit health care system. She spoke with blunt honesty before a U.S. House Judiciary Committee on July 17:

“I am so angry with you,” she said. “I lived the



American dream as my father taught me and as his father taught him. I worked, I educated myself, I bought a home and then moved into a better home, I raised my children responsibly and I served my community – and you left me battered and broken because you failed to act on health care reform...

“Just as I have come out of the shadows of economic ruin and shame, so will others to hold you accountable.” She urged co-sponsorship of Michigan Rep. John Conyers’ bill, HR676, or Extended and Improved Medicare for All. It is a single payer bill covering medical and dental services for all Americans.

Donna Smith advises fellow single payer supporters: **“Though many of our elected officials will scatter like bugs when they are forced to take a stand on this issue or heaven forbid stand in unity with Michael Moore, it is up to you and me to hold them steady to the cause. They must fear our voices and the loss of our votes more than they fear the loss of health care lobby money for their campaigns if they do not tow the private health care line.”**

*by Roger Signor, MoSP program chair*



*Health Care Activist Donna Smith*



## IN MEMORIAM

**Dr. Herman T. Blumenthal** passed away November 5. He was a long time member of MoSP and an activist for Medicare for All. Hy could always be counted on for advice and participation. He was always there for us.

**Ken Schlarman** passed away November 27. He was a recent member of MoSP, but considered it one of his most important concerns. Medicare for All and health care as a human right was what he believed.

Both families have asked that memorials be made to MoSP. We greatly appreciate this generosity. Both Hy and Ken will always be with us in spirit.

## Strategies Abound at Single Payer Conference

Julia Lamborn, Lindy Hern, and I represented MOSP among over one hundred single payer advocates at the national strategy conference of Healthcare-NOW in Chicago November 19 and 20. Julia participated in the small business caucus and Lindy joined with the student caucus. I worked with the patient advocate, doctor, and nurse caucus.

Congressman John Conyers inspired us the first night with a rousing talk. HR 676 has 86 cosponsors with a goal of 100 by year's end. Liv Boykin, Senior Staff Associate of Congressman Conyers rallied the group with a song, "The Old Gray Granny", a bitter-sweet spoof of our cruel health care system. State Legislator Mary Flowers spoke about statewide single payer efforts in Illinois.

The Chicago Single Payer Action Network (C-SPAN) described large demonstrations in front of Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Single payer advocates in Gainesville, Florida spoke on Truth Hearings, meetings with members of Congress, resulting in getting new HR 676 cosponsors. Coalitions in California and Massachusetts fought against mandatory private insurance, and advocated for single payer national guaranteed health care for all. As the grand finale for the second conference day, we launched the SiCKO National Road Show Bus tour to begin traveling to cities across the country where clever actions and activities have been arranged by local single payer coalitions.

As individuals and as members of MOSP, we will tailor our strategies to accommodate our strengths and our talents. Ideas included:

- Website for college students and more "My Space" activity
- Distribute a list of Congress members with their contact information regularly
- Use the non-profit arm of "You Tube"

- Frame the issue from a business perspective
- Show how single payer can lower property taxes
- Boston Tea Party to throw Mitt Romney's individual mandate in the harbor
- Publicize that 82,700 people in the United States have died from insurance company denials since the beginning of the Iraq War
- Special National Day of Action on the birthday of Medicare (July 30, 1965): Demonstrations at headquarters of insurance companies; expose death by denials
- Bird-dogging the candidates: go to [www.progressives2008.org](http://www.progressives2008.org) for information
- Martin Luther King Day media message: inequality in health care or guaranteed choice single payer health care
- Get your Congressman to endorse HR 676 and elect Progressive Candidates
- Class Action suit over insurance denials
- Mail medical bills, emergency room bills to Crawford, Texas for Christmas
- Leadership conference by Congressional districts, Coalition for guaranteed health care 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every month: [www.pdamerica.org/leadership](http://www.pdamerica.org/leadership)
- Work in groups of 50 or more, wear union jackets, have your main point in one sentence
- Actions at stockholder meetings of insurance companies, confront the CEO, get a shareholder resolution
- March on Washington on anniversary of "I Have a Dream" speech, August 28
- SiCKO movie house parties
- Demonstrations at the Democratic and Republican Conventions
- July 4 Declaration of Independence from insurance companies
- Enclose postcards addressed to Congressmen for HR 676 inside holiday greeting cards
- Join American Patients for Universal Health Care: [www.APUHC.com](http://www.APUHC.com)
- Health Care Justice Quilt: patchwork of pain" to

tell the American story of health care

-Ask your own provider, "Do you support single payer universal health care?" Discuss this issue with her/him. Change to a new doctor if unchanged.

-Public vigils to bring in more people

-Be creative to get media attention

-Statewide single payer road shows

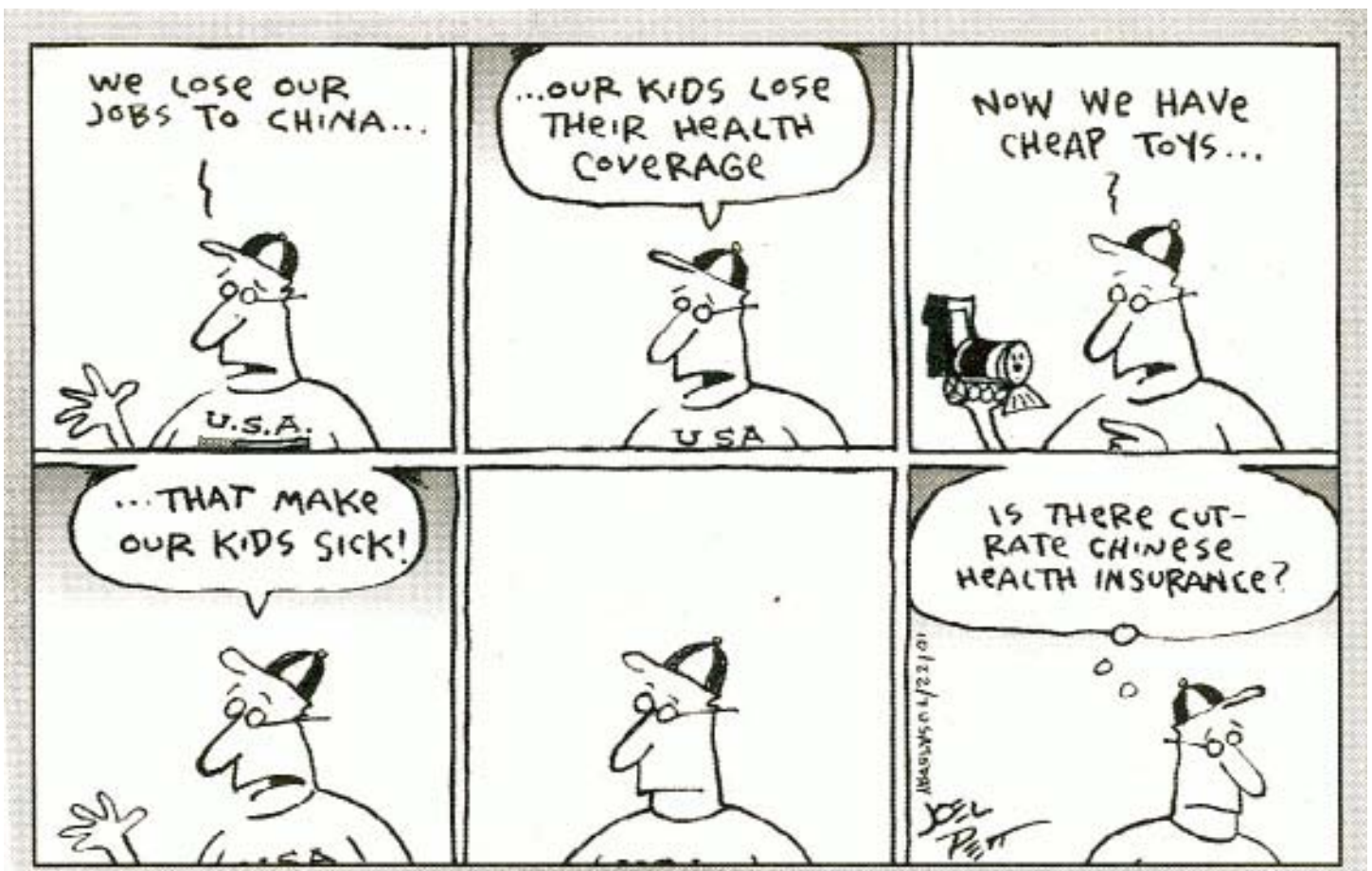
*By Mimi Signor, RN*

## New Business Member

Wale Ogunrinde of CopyPrint Design has joined MoSP as a business member. He very graciously enabled us to afford 100 "Medicare for All" yard signs. His newly opened sign business is at 8235 N. Lindbergh, Florissant, MO. If you need signs, he would be glad to help. If it weren't for Wale, we would only have 50 signs.

## YARD SIGNS AVAILABLE

Generous donations have enabled MoSP to have 100 "Medicare for All" yard signs printed. Thank you to all who contributed. Contact Julia at [Julia0409@aol.com](mailto:Julia0409@aol.com) to arrange for signs. Please distribute far and wide.



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### Categories

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual, \$20      I will contribute \$ \_\_\_\_\_ towards \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Family, \$30      \_\_\_\_\_

(specific programming and expenses)

\_\_\_\_\_ Organization, \$50

\_\_\_\_\_ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 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.