



Missourians for Single Payer Health Care

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MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Julia E. Lamborn-Gettinger

Spring has sprung and so have our opportunities to demand change and forge ahead for health care for all through single payer – Medicare For All! MoSP has exciting programs planned for 2008. The first, beginning **April 19, is our seventh Health Care Weekend program with a free public showing of the movie, SiCKO, at the Ethical Society, 6:30 p.m.** Donna and Larry Smith, co-stars of the movie and recipients of health care in Cuba, will be in St. Louis to talk about their experiences with Michael Moore and the Cuban health system. Watch the film, meet and greet them up close and personal.

On **Sunday, April 20, Donna and Larry will be our guest platform speakers at the St. Louis Ethical Society, 11:00 a.m.** They will further document and explain why the United States needs health care for all. Donna has gone on to found the American Patients for Universal Health Care. Donna is a charismatic and energizing speaker. I know you will be excited to meet this brave couple. All of us could become Donna and Larry. After the platform we will have a brief reception so that you may visit with Donna and Larry.

Now, for the part I hate the most: asking for money to support our programs. We try to keep our dues low so that anyone can afford to become a member. We do not pay our speakers, but when travel, lodging and food are involved MoSP pays for these expenses. The St. Louis Ethical Society has been very generous with funding for these programs, as have some other coalitions and organizations. We not only need money to complete these programs, we also need volunteers to accomplish them. This is your opportunity to show that you really care and believe in what your officers are doing; that you believe in Medicare for All!!!! We cannot continue these programs without your support – monetarily and with hands and hearts. In the near

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See SiCKO on 4/19/08



*SiCKO's Donna Smith to
give Health Care Weekend
address on 4/20/08*

future you will be called on to help with many different volunteer opportunities. This is your organization; this is your program. I think it could easily be one of the best we have ever had – but we will need your help!

Please don't disappoint your officers. It is very difficult to continue fighting for a cause that we all know is possible, but which vested interests refuse to consider. To my knowledge, Missourians for Single Payer – Medicare for All, is the only organization in Missouri that does not receive grants from foundations while fighting for Medicare for All. Others have similar names and say they are for Medicare for All, but what they really mean is that they are for “insurance” for all. Insurance is not Health Care. Medicare is already in place; there is no reason to reinvent the wheel. Congressman John Conyers, Jr. sponsors HR676 – Improved and Expanded Medicare for All. Congressman Lacy Clay is the only Missouri Congressman who has been brave enough to cosponsor. Please thank him for his support.

Please give MoSP your support so that we can continue the fight for all. We can make a difference, but we need YOUR help. Send your checks to MoSP, 438 N. Skinker Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63130. Contact Julia to volunteer at Julia0409@aol.com.



MO Universal Health Assurance Hearing

The Missouri Universal Health Assurance Act, SB 1101, sponsored by Senator Joan Bray, and cosponsored by Senators Rita Days, Jeff Smith, Tim Green, and Jolie Justus had a bill hearing Tuesday, March 11 before the Senate Health & Mental Health Committee. Three committee members present were: Chuck Purgeson, Chair, Charlie Shields, Vice-Chair, and Wes

Donna Smith: “Beyond *SiCKO*”

The Ethical Society St. Louis's Annual Health Care Platform Address, entitled “Beyond *SiCKO*!” will be given at 11 a.m., Sunday, April 20, 2008 by a former victim of America's broken health care system.

She is Donna Smith of Chicago, now a fulltime worker for universal health care as communications specialist for the 80,000-member National Nurses Organizing Committee. Her comeback from the wreckage of the nation's millions of uninsured and “non-insurable” was rare and literally life saving.

Smith, 55, was a major voice in the documentary, *SiCKO*, directed by Michael Moore. The 2007 film followed the plight of a dozen families — after their “full-coverage” insurance failed them when they needed it most.

Smith's talk will be in the Ethical Society's auditorium, 9001 Clayton Road. On April 19, *SiCKO* will be shown at 6:30 p.m., also in the auditorium. Donna's husband, Larry Smith, who appeared in *SiCKO* too, will join her to introduce the film and answer questions after its free showing.

The couple had been forced to file for bankruptcy in 2005 — after mounting debts from their increased premiums, deductibles, co-pays and other expenses. Larry had undergone several heart surgeries; then Donna Smith had to have surgery for early stage uterine cancer.

With their savings gone and their huge debts, they had to sell their “dream home” in South Dakota. No longer able to do heavy lifting, Larry lost his machinist's job. They moved into a small room in their daughter's home in Colorado. Donna had to leave her editor's job. They were down, but not out.

Donna impulsively “fired off a terse reply” to

Michael Moore who had appealed nationwide for families to film for *SiCKO*. Weeks later, Donna was astounded to learn that she and Larry were among the few selected from many thousands who answered Moore's Internet appeal.

After the movie, Moore urged Donna to write for his website. She published hard-hitting updates about her nationwide bus tour to promote *SiCKO* and Congressional bill HR 676 for universal access to health care for all Americans. She testified eloquently before Congress for the bill, which has 88 sponsors. But many others fear industry's retaliations if they support it.

In addition to her scores of campus, church and town hall talks, she founded the national organization, American Patients for Universal Health Care. Her energy and dynamic speaking and reporting led to her being hired by the California Nurses Association, which supports HR 676. She now works for the group's National Nurses Organizing Committee.

After she and Larry had just moved to Chicago, she wrote a few weeks ago:

"How many other Americans have spent years, as I did, struggling with worries about health care and insurance and money and just staying afloat? For the past 20 years, my sleep patterns have drifted from bad to worse as our lives were upended by health concerns and made terrifying by the financial ruin that followed.

"Pressure and worry had robbed me of my sleep for so long that when I slept through the night on Sunday, I thought it a fluke. Then I slept through the night on Monday and again on Tuesday. Though on a hide-a-bed folded out into an apartment living room still jammed with unpacked boxes, my soul and my body have begun to heal."

by Roger Signor, MoSP program chair

Lack of Health Coverage Linked to 500 Missouri Deaths in 2006

Each week in Missouri, ten residents die as the direct result of having no health insurance, reports Families USA, a national consumers organization.

Families USA noted the following about the number of Missouri deaths:

- In 2006, nearly 10 working-age adults died each week due to a lack of health insurance.
- Between 2000 and 2006, an estimated 2,800 adult deaths, between the ages of 25 and 64, were linked to a lack of insurance. Among adults between ages 55 and 64 years, the lack of health insurance is now the third leading cause of death, following heart disease and cancer, said Ron Pollack, executive director of Families USA.

The consumer organization based its analysis on studies by the non-partisan, national Institute of Medicine and the Urban Institute.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! MOSP Media Conference and March

On Saturday, April 19, 2008, at 10:30, we are looking for volunteers. We will meet in University City at 11 a.m. on the steps of City Hall for a march through the Delmar Loop to protest the loss of more than 80,000 people who died because they were refused health care. We will return to City Hall for a 1 p.m. press conference.

Please wear all black. We will provide mock head stones, and literature for distribution during the silent march. This opportunity is open to anyone who is interested in supporting our work towards health care for all. **Please call Pat Singley at 314.703.1539 with your lists of participants.**

We Have Dead Bodies, So Where's Our Outrage?

By Donna Smith, *American SiCKO*

DENVER – With more than 50 Americans dead every day due to a lack of adequate health care, the health care reform movement has all the dead bodies it needs to meet the demands of an outraged public. Yet the movement for true health care reform does not yet garner the attention of nearly as many people as the anti-Iraq war effort.

The fact is that more than 82,500 Americans have died as the result of our broken health care system since the Iraq war began in the spring of 2003. We're racking up the health care casualties as fast as if we had fought 22 Iraq wars during the same time period. Yet, why don't the dead matter as much in this battle?

I wonder if some day we'll build a wall and list all the names of the health care crisis dead. It would be quite a large wall. We have far more names already than the Vietnam conflict. And the people are dying right next door and down the block and in our neighborhoods and communities. I wonder if my name will be on that wall.

Is it because the health care war dead are the uninsured and underinsured? Have we already judged those dead as somehow complicit in their own demise? Have we written them off as folks who were too



irresponsible, too stupid or just too unlucky to take better care of themselves? Where the hell is our survivors' guilt?



If we just started counting in March 2003 when the Iraq war began, the U.S. health care crisis battle would already have 82,500 dead. Maybe someday we'll build a wall or a monument.

I went to an anti-war rally in downtown Denver on Saturday. It was one of many across the nation. It was a powerful gathering with lots of committed people speaking out and some even saying if we'd just stop funding the war we would put that money toward health care or education or other domestic issues. There were hundreds of people with signs and showing great and appropriate remorse for America's war dead and for all the Iraqi citizens killed.

Then I went to a health care forum. There were nine people there. They were committed. They were concerned. But they were still talking strategy and how to overcome political hurdles and how to grow the movement. Apparently none of us has been smart enough to figure out why more than 82,500 dead Americans does not strike a loud enough chord over the past five years.

And talk about financial waste? Ugh. This clearly is not even the most economical way to handle health care. You see, greed does not really care about the nation's health at all.

One way we will make that number of health care dead more tangible is to actually assign names to it. That's what Michael Moore did in *SiCKO*. He put names and faces with the numbers. I didn't notice too many slackers or deadbeats among my fellow Americans on that screen.

But, it has been hard work over the past few months to keep reminding people who just haven't touched it or felt it or internalized it yet, that this crisis is one of those cases that unless we all speak up now, unless we speak for our neighbors in their times of health care trauma and pain, then when our time comes, there may be no one left to speak for us.

So, here we stand with Congress and the president and their failure to agree upon and pass the SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program). Because they'll be rushing to get to Thanksgiving break, it is likely now that Bush will veto the latest Congressional bill, Congress will once again fail to override the veto and Congress will have to write some continuing resolution legislation to fund the current program for a year. No one will have reached any sort of compromise.

And people – this time very young Americans – will continue to die as Congress pats itself on the back for trying and the president praises himself for holding those nasty lefties at bay. And kids will die. I guess we better get busy on that monument, eh?

Working families that cannot afford health insurance or health care will wait for treatment until diseases and illnesses have advanced. But we all know that, and most of us will turn away from the pain of it and make our holiday shopping lists. Maybe we'll offer to buy Christmas gifts for a poor child. And we'll sleep better for that.

But I am joining two of my fellow moms from *SiCKO*, and we're going on a hunger strike for health care. We want to raise the stakes of the discussion a bit more. We want others to know that we once risked our lives to bring our children into this world, and we will risk them again to make sure they are not casualties of the U.S. health care crisis.

I surely want the Iraq war to end. I hate thinking about the death and the destruction. But I want this completely preventable health care crisis to end too. I think about those 82,500 Americans dead. I think about the kids, the moms, the dads, the folks who did nothing worse than getting sick and being too broke to buy back their health.

And I hope as I make my way through my days of hunger striking that I will spend one minute each half-hour thinking about and praying for the American out there somewhere who is dying at that moment without access to adequate health care. It turns out I'm not very hungry anyway when I think about that.

(This article is from the SiCKO blog: Donna Smith's 2007 story on deaths from lack of health insurance)



MO Hearing (from page 2)

Shoemyer. Senator Bray did a good job defending the bill. Afterward MoSP President, Julia Lamborn and I testified. Senators Purgeson and Shields asked thoughtful and insightful questions. They agreed that the real solution is a nationwide health program, but that the states are forced to forge state plans in the meantime.

State Representative Craig Bland of Kansas City is sponsor of the HB 1833, the House version that includes the progressive income tax.

By Mimi Signor, RN

Health Care Weekend Events

MOSP's Seventh Annual Health Care Weekend will be launched by a demonstration at 11 a.m. on Saturday, April 19, in the University City Loop, followed by a news conference at 1 p.m. on the steps of City Hall.

Theme of the weekend is "Beyond *SiCKO*" — after the 2007 documentary that showed suffering and deaths among Americans whose "full coverage" insurance failed them after they faced emergencies and serious illnesses.

A recent updating of annual deaths among underinsured and uninsured Americans showed that 137,000 died from 2000 to 2006 because they could not get adequate health care. Based on a 2002 study by the U.S. Institute of Medicine, the non-partisan Urban Institute updated the study and published its findings on January 8. The Urban Institute also reported 22,000 deaths from lack of health insurance in 2006.



Don't Miss the Bus! See *SiCKO* at the Ethical Society on Saturday, April 19

In support of true health care reform, University City Mayor Joseph Adams proclaimed Saturday, April 19 and Sunday, April 20, as "Health Care Weekend." The annual program is sponsored by Missourians for Single Payer Health Care and the Ethical Society of St. Louis.

On June 5, 2006, Mayor Adams and the University City Council voted unanimously to endorse Congressman John Conyers' bill, HR 676 to establish "expanded and improved Medicare for all Americans. The city was the first in Missouri to endorse the bill.

Schedule of key events for Health Care Weekend are as follows:

Thursday, April 17, 11 a.m. to Noon, KWMU's "St. Louis on the Air" will feature Donna and Larry Smith, a couple highlighted in the 2007 documentary, *SiCKO*. She is the main speaker for Health Care Weekend.

Saturday, April 19, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. A street theater group will march in protest of deaths directly related to the nation's broken health care system.

At 6:30 p.m. the Smiths will introduce a free public showing of *SiCKO* in the auditorium of the Ethical Society, 9001 Clayton Blvd. in Ladue.

Sunday, April 20, 11 a.m., Donna Smith, will give the Annual Platform Lecture on Health Care, also at the society.

In an essay, she wrote: "One way we will make the numbers of dead from lack of health care more tangible is to assign names to them. That's what Michael Moore did in *SiCKO*. He put names and faces with the numbers."

By Roger Signor

Adopt-A-Candidate

MOSP is a grassroots non-partisan, all-volunteer coalition of individuals and groups that advocate for a universal single payer health program. To enact this program into law, we all must get to work.

Help progressive candidates win and empower them to enact the program. Candidates win with the help of a small army of dedicated volunteers—YOU. Seek out a candidate who believes in a single payer universal health system and will work for it. To adopt the candidate, join the campaign. This means garnering support through hosting gatherings, and talking face-to-face with registered and regular voters about the merits of your candidate. Your personal appeal makes the difference. Knocking on neighbors' doors can be intimidating at first, but rewarding. Walking is beneficial to your health through exercise, and talking, a way to forge new friendships with like-minded folks.

I have adopted a Congressional candidate and a House candidate. Many others desperately need your help. The primary may be the key race for a candidate. Find a leader to champion. Volunteer today.

Missouri Resolutions Gain Support

By Mimi Signor, RN

State Representative Jeanette Mott Oxford has more cosponsors this year for the House Concurrent Resolution to endorse HR 676, Congressman Conyer's national single payer bill, "Expanded and Improved Medicare for All". Thanks to MOSP members who asked their Representatives to sign on. In addition to Rep. Oxford, thank the following House cosponsors: Corcoran, Scavuzzo, Darrough, Frame, Casey, Norr, Brown (50), Fallert, Komo, George, Holsman, Meadows, Young, Daus, Aull, Roorda, Talboy, Nasheed, Schieffer, Walsh, Low, El-Amin, Bland, Curls, Lowe, Wright-Jones, Wildberger, Chappelle-Nadal, Hughes, Spreng, Hoskins, Rucker, Walton, Johnson, Haywood, and Vogt. Contact your state representative and senator to express your point of view and why you believe in it. Senator Joan Bray is filing the Senate Concurrent Resolution. When the Resolutions are granted a public hearing, your personal testimony will help the Resolutions succeed in passing. Democracy works when its citizens participate.

By Mimi Signor, RN



♥ You are invited! ♥

Missourians for Single Payer requests the honor of your presence at the private party for special guests, Donna and Larry Smith, from the acclaimed documentary *SiCKO* by Michael Moore.

Members of MoSP, of Congress, of the Missouri Legislature, and MO AFL-CIO and St. Louis Area Labor Council who endorse H.R. 676, "Expanded and Improved Medicare for All" are cordially invited to attend our evening of cocktails, music, and talk.

The evening begins at 7 PM, Friday, April 18 in the Reception Hall of the Ethical Society of St. Louis' Lower Level.

RSVP to Esther Clark at 314-416-0366 before April 11, 2008.

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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.