



**DON'T LET ELECTILE DYSFUNCTION
LEAVE HEALTH REFORM LIMP.
ASK YOUR CONGRESS ABOUT**

singlePAYER

BY ALAN PITTMAN

Diane Sciacca beat cancer, but she couldn't beat Blue Cross Blue Shield. "They jacked my premium up to more than I could afford. I had to drop them," she said. Sciacca joined about 40 other protesters July 9 on the U.S. Courthouse steps calling for single payer health care reform. "It's really scandalous," she said of the current U.S. health care system.

Dianne Sciacca is uninsured.



ALAN PITTMAN

The U.S. spends more than any other nation on health care but gets far less for its money. The cost of the nation's health care system has ballooned 10-fold since the 1960s into a \$2.3-trillion behemoth that swallows a fifth of the nation's economy, according to numbers compiled by the *Washington Post*. If the growth rate continues, it could ingest about half the economy in another decade. But the hugely expensive system still leaves 47 million people uninsured, 100,000 dead per year from hospital infections and 1.5 million harmed per year by medical errors, the *Post* reports.

Other nations with single payer health care insurance systems run by the government spend about half as much per person with no one uninsured and far better results. Of 37 industrialized nations, the U.S. ranks 29th in infant mortality and has some of the world's worst rates of preventable deaths, obesity and heart disease, according to the *Post*.

"We should have a single payer health care system," said Karl Eysenbach at the Eugene courthouse rally. "The only country that has this cockamamie system is the U.S."

With health care a worsening national disgrace, even some of the insurance lords who strangled previous reform efforts in the crib are talking about the need for universal coverage.

To get there, President Barack Obama and leading Democrats in Congress are struggling to push a complex reform package involving requiring everyone to buy insurance, requiring insurers to refuse no one, government subsidies for insurance buyers and an expansion of Medicare

for the poor and some cost controls and regulations.

Progressives argue that instead of the Democrat's mish mash or the current system, a European-style single payer system where the government directly insures everyone would be far superior.

Single payer supporters argue that this is why:

CHEAPER. As previously noted, single payer countries spend far less on their health care. In the U.S., the popular Medicare program, a government single-payer program for the elderly, has successfully controlled health care costs for decades. Government health insurance won't bear the burden of the billions of dollars private insurers waste on big executive salaries, profits and advertising.

"We're paying for all those Viagra ads and other stuff," said Nancy Forrest, who's organizing single payer support for the Eugene Springfield Solidarity Network (ESSN).

Because health care costs represent such a huge drag on the economy (medical bills contribute to half of all bankruptcies), big reductions could provide the nation a much needed economic boost. A California Nurses Association study estimates a \$317-billion boost to the economy and 2.6 million new jobs from single payer reform.

Obama says he's gathered pledges from insurance companies and others in the health care industry to reduce their high costs. But skeptics are unsure if real savings will materialize. It's not like the big health care companies are reducing their executive salaries, payrolls or profit projections.