

OPINION

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<p>The Portland Observer USPS 959-680 Established 1970 4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211</p>	<p>STAFF</p>	<p>EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER Charles H. Washington</p>	<p>CREATIVE DIRECTOR Paul Neufeldt</p>
		<p>EDITOR Michael Leighton</p>	<p>WRITER, PHOTOGRAPHER David Plechl</p>
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BASIC HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

Universal health care initiative embodies ideals of Martin Luther King Jr.

BY WALT BROWN
Measure 23, the "Health Care for All Oregon" initiative, has won endorsements from dozens of groups dedicated to people of all races and backgrounds. Among these organizations are the Consumers Union; the Oregon, Alaska, and Washington

State Conference of the NAACP; Church Women of Oregon, Multnomah County Retired Educators; and the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, a group that includes the African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, United Church of Christ and Methodist Church.



Walt Brown

As of Sept. 30, Kaiser Permanente Northwest, PacifiCare of Oregon, Pacificsource Health Plans, ODS Health Plans, and Blue Cross Blue Shields of Oregon, the biggest players in Oregon's health insurance and health care industry, had each contributed \$50,000 or more to defeat Measure 23.

These opponents of universal health care have smeared Measure 23's supporters with an un-American, McCarthyite, red-baiting attack. The ploy is to confuse voters by comparing "socialized health insurance" with "socialized medicine."

The ploy has been used before. As a U.S. senator, former President George Bush voted against Medicare as being "socialized medicine."

In fact, Medicare is "socialized health insurance" run by the U.S. government.

Of all the forms of injustice, inequality of health care is the most shocking and the most inhumane.

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

EMO sums up its support of Measure 23 this way: "EMO upholds its social principal of the right to basic health care for all. We have witnessed over the years many who struggle without basic health care in our current system. While this measure, like other health care systems around the world, has pros and cons, it is a step in the right direction. The measure of society is based upon its willingness to provide the basic needs for all."

Measure 23 ensures access to affordable quality health care for all Oregon residents through a comprehensive insurance plan providing payment for medically necessary health services.

The key concepts of the measure are medical security, affordability, universality and choice.

It would guarantee that health insurance coverage could never be denied if you or your family change jobs, retire, or have a serious, pre-existing medical condition. It would save you money by getting rid of deductibles, co-payments and insurance premiums. All residents of the state would be eligible to choose from any state licensed, certified, or registered health care practitioner. You pick your health care provider, not your HMO!

The medical services provided by Measure 23 include prescriptions, inpatient and outpatient services, vision and dental, long-term care, preventive medicine, mental health, complementary medicine, alternative treatments, and necessary transportation.

The campaign against universal health care is being waged by the so-called "Oregonians Against Unhealthy Taxes", a two-member political action committee formed on Aug. 13. Its only members are Mark W. Nelson, a highly paid Salem lobbyist and Ken Yates, listed as a "trade association executive."

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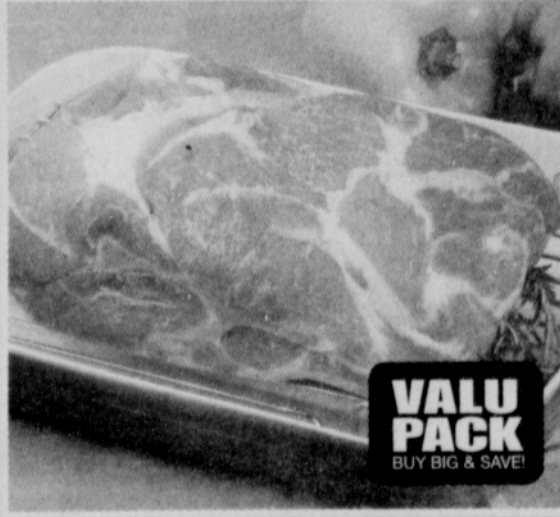
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