

Why We Need Just Health Care

Tips for Giving a Speech

As an organizer for Just Health Care, you may be asked to give a talk conveying our reasons for advocating national health insurance. By using all or parts of the sample talk below, you should be able to handle a variety of questions from your audience. Use the information in this kit and draw on your own experiences to answer “Why We Need Just Health Care.” When possible, also try to tell a personal story that ties in with the need for national health insurance.

DELIVERY:

Notwithstanding the importance of good text and knowledge of the topic, the actual delivery of the talk can make the difference between success or failure. Sincerity, appearance, voice, diction, eye contact with the audience, choice words and speaking aids are the elements each speaker must consider with care.

Believe in what you say. Speak clearly, don’t rush. Speak loudly enough to be heard and slowly enough to be able to speak each word clearly. Simple words are always better than uncommon words, both for understanding and effect.

Speaking aids such as flip charts or overhead transparencies can increase understanding; they should complement a presentation, not take the place of good expression.

Know the audience - its background and its attitude toward the topic. Find out if anyone else is speaking on the program.

ORGANIZATION:

Give your talk a purpose and form. Clear organization is vital. Your listeners can’t flip back a page to re-read if the message is unclear. Determine your main points and plan the body of the talk around them. Because listeners cannot keep track of a multitude of main points, you should have no more than two to five.

STEPS TO GIVING A GOOD TALK:

- 1:** Get their attention - Your introduction must crash through any apathy and get the attention and interest of your audience. It will also reveal the topic of your talk.
- 2:** State why and how this affects them - Let the audience know why this political alternative is of interest and importance to them. People will pay attention to things that affect them.
- 3:** Support your position with examples.
- 4:** Ask for action - In this action, also include any information about what the Labor Party is doing in your local area and ask for participation.

CONCLUSION:

The conclusion has two major objectives - to let the audience know you are ending the talk and to reinforce their understanding of your topic. There are several techniques to reinforce your central idea in the conclusion. They include summarizing the talk, ending with a pertinent quotation, making a dramatic statement, and referring to the opening statement.

Why We Need Just Health Care

Sample Speech

Our health care system is a national disgrace. Americans pay more money for less health care than the citizens of any other industrialized country in the world. Everyone knows this but nothing ever changes. Things just get worse. I stand before you today asking a simple question: Why can't the American people get the kind of health care they deserve?

Let me tell you about myself. I'm one of the lucky ones. I have health insurance. My union has fought long and hard to maintain decent medical insurance. We have waged bitter strikes to preserve it. Valuable dollars that could have gone to wages or pensions have been set aside at the bargaining table to provide health insurance.

And yet I am worse off than I was ten years ago. I'm paying more for my coverage and getting less for my money. My retirement will be less secure as Medicare crumbles and companies abandon their "lifetime" obligations to their employees. My employer's future is less secure as it is forced to compete with unscrupulous employers who pay nothing for employee health care or global companies who have a competitive cost advantage by producing in countries with national health insurance. If I lose my job, I lose my benefits. My children will lose all coverage as soon as they turn 21.

Then there are the true horror stories. We all have a relative, friend or neighbor who has lost everything because of some catastrophic medical event. We all know someone trapped in some horrible, dead end job because they are slaves to their employer-provided health care. We've seen senior citizens, proud Americans who have worked hard and paid their taxes their whole lives, forced to cut their pills in half to make them last until the next social security check. Mothers going without pre-natal care, babies without vaccinations, unemployed families losing their homes, old folks losing everything they worked for; these are some of the symptoms of a system that has its priorities wrong.

And what are the priorities of our health care system? Well, in this country health care is run as a business. In fact, health care is the largest "business sector" in our economy. A \$1.4 trillion business at last count. Like all business, its sole purpose is to make a profit. By this standard, the American health care industry has performed quite well. Its component companies consistently rank as among the most profitable in America. But if you judge it by other standards, we're not doing that well. The United States ranks 28th in the world in infant mortality. We rank 14th in life expectancy. Yet we spend more per person on health care than any other nation on the face of the earth.

There is another way. Health care should not be treated as a commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace. It should be seen as a birthright for all Americans. This is not a radical notion. Every other industrialized nation in the world today has found ways to provide health care for all. Polls show that the American people consistently support this right.

But if you listen to the politicians and the press, you would think that this right was some sort of impossible dream that could never be achieved on this earth. In fact, every time the politicians try to fix our health care system, they seem to make it worse.

Ten years ago, a new scheme called "managed competition" was supposed to solve all our problems. It was going to control costs, make health care more accessible and improve quality. Well, look what we have today: we are faced with double digit premium increases year after year after year; the number of Americans without any kind of health insurance at all is approaching 45 million; and the type and quality of care that we receive is subject to the whim of some nameless corporate bureaucrat at the other end of some "800" number that we have to call every time we need help.

Or take a look at the so-called Medicare prescription drug program. Nearly every politician in America is going around bragging about how they fought for pre-

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scription drugs for senior citizens. But they did a really smart thing. They deferred the start date of the program until after the 2004 elections. Because when our senior citizens begin to try to actually use their new “benefit”, they are going to find that it is all but useless for nearly everyone.

There is a straightforward solution to all of this mess. It’s called Just Health Care and it was developed by the Labor Party and recently endorsed by my union. Like many other organizations that have analyzed this problem, we call for a “single payer” national health insurance plan. This is the approach endorsed by Physicians for a National Health Program—a group of over 10,000 doctors who have published recent articles in the Journal of the American Medical Association and the New England Journal of Medicine.

A “single payer” plan would eliminate the insurance companies as middlemen and provide the same standard of coverage to every American. We think that there is no other way to really reform health care in this country. If you don’t eliminate the outrageous profiteering and absurd wastefulness of private health insurance, nothing will ever really change.

Just Health Care would provide cradle to grave coverage for every American. It would not be linked to employment. Those proposals that call for an “employer mandate” that would require every employer to provide some level of coverage don’t go far enough. Health care must be seen as a right for all Americans. Every employer should have the duty to pay into a system of health coverage for all Americans but no employer should have the ability to control the coverage of any American.

Our proposal for what would be covered is quite simple. We want every American to receive the full range of coverage currently provided to every member of congress, every federal judge and the president of the United States. Everyone would be provided with coverage for doctor’s bills, hospitalization, all tests and referrals, prescription drugs, mental health and substance abuse, long term, nursing home and home health care services. There would be no co-pays and no deductibles. There would be no complicated forms to fill out. Just a simple card.

Believe it or not, this entire package can be financed in such a way that 95% of all Americans pay less than they are currently paying. How is that possible? By

eliminating the waste and profiteering, we can save billions of dollars. We can raise billions more by requiring all employers to pay a modest payroll tax of 5.5%. This is less than what most employers who actually pay for employee coverage are currently paying for private insurance. Billions more can be raised by making the rich pay their fair share through a tax on stock and bond transfers and a modest tax increase for those earning more than \$183,000 per year.

In fact, there is enough left over to provide for a decent package of severance benefits, retirement incentives and retraining allowances for those tens of thousands of workers whose jobs will no longer be necessary under a rational system of health care. These are the people who process the claims, deny the referrals, send out multiple bills and all of the other wasteful tasks of our profit driven health care system. As advocates for working people everywhere, we have a responsibility to make accommodations for those whose livelihoods are threatened by our proposals. We call it “just transition”. Instead of spending their lives pushing papers, we think everyone’s lives would be vastly improved if these folks were trained to provide better health care, more education and other services for everyone.

So if the solution is so easy, why haven’t the politicians come up with it? The answer should be obvious to any thinking person. We’re talking about a change here that would affect the largest and most profitable industry in the country. We all know that politics is about money and special interests. In this case, the greed and self-interest of a few have blocked the needs and desires of the overwhelming majority of the people.

Yes, there are a few decent elected officials who honestly support real reform. But their hands are tied. Until we build the kind of movement that will hold all politicians accountable to the needs of the people, any real change is doomed.

So today I call on you to join with us in the Just Health Care campaign. We are at the beginning of a long road of education, activism and mobilization. This is a road that will make us a greater nation and provide care for all the people. As we move down this road, let it be known that all will be held accountable. We need to confront the employers who obstruct us; the news media who confuse us and the politicians who try to fool us. We will settle for nothing less than health care for all Americans!