

Sent: Sun, 06 Sep 2009 12:12:36 -0400
From: Gregg Gonsalves [REDACTED]
To: "Axelrod, David M." <axelrod_d@who.eop.gov>
Bcc: "Axelrod, David M." </o=eop/ou=first administrative group/cn=recipients/cn=david_m._axelrod">
Subject: Re: Mr. Axelrod-Tell Me How You'll Fix Things w/o a Public Option

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Look-I am a supporter of the President and your work. I know this is complicated and lots of components make a successful bill. As he has said, if there is another way to ensure competition and choice without the public option, I'd be for it too. But it's not apparent that there is one in all these many months of talking about it. Thus, we may get an individual mandate and the industry emboldened by their success in beating the public option will fight any stringent regulations, caps, etc. with the help of Republicans and the Gang of Six. You know all of this. I still believe in the President, but the speech on Wednesday night needs to show us that he is fighting for us. He can with a few words cut through the Republican noise machine and show us what real leadership looks like. The Republicans don't have a viable alternative to health care reform, they have delays and obstructions. Even Mrs. Snowe, a "moderate" would like to put the public option in limbo like we did with the triggers for Medicare Part D. That's not progress. The President doesn't have to make veto threats on Wednesday but does have to say what true reform looks like and that he wants it--right now it looks to ordinary people like he is negotiating downwards, is prepared to ask for less and will end up getting less than even that. Lots of us are calling, writing, members of Congress, but only the President can take back this debate, reorient the national conversation about how to address the needs of Americans without insurance, those with insurance that still pay too much for too little. Again, I wish you the best and I want my President to succeed. If he can bring home a real health care bill, he will go down in the history books and his Administration will be on firm footing for future success and millions of Americans will benefit. Please don't settle for anything less.
Gregg

On Sun, Sep 6, 2009 at 11:32 AM, Axelrod, David M.<Axelrod_D@who.eop.gov> wrote:
> Mr. Golsalves, apparently you weren't listening carefully if you thought I said the President was giving up on the public option. In fact, I said repeatedly that he thinks it was important and valuable to bring competition and choice to the insurance exchange we are creating. I also said it isn't the whole of health insurance reform. We have to do much more.
> As for your situation, the insurance reforms we are advocating would put a cap on out-of-pocket expenses, stop insurance companies from adding charges for preventive tests and care, and prevent insurance companies from dropping people who are seriously ill.
> It would be a shame if our efforts to help protect the 160 million people who have insurance today, and make insurance affordable for those who don't have it, would fail because of misinformation and over-heated rhetoric.
> Thanks for your thoughts,
> David Axelrod
>
> ----- Original Message -----
> From: Gregg Gonsalves <[REDACTED]>
> To: Axelrod, David M.; Jarrett, Valerie; eemanuel@mail.cc.nih.gov
<eemanuel@mail.cc.nih.gov>; dplouffe@akpdmedia.com <dplouffe@akpdmedia.com>;
terri.mccullough@mail.house.gov <terri.mccullough@mail.house.gov>; DeParle, Nancy-Ann M.;

sharon.parrott@hhs.gov <sharon.parrott@hhs.gov>; Favreau, Jon; linda.douglass@hhs.gov
<linda.douglass@hhs.gov>; michael.hash@hhs.gov <michael.hash@hhs.gov>

> Sent: Sun Sep 06 11:20:22 2009

> Subject: Mr. Axelrod-Tell Me How You'll Fix Things w/o a Public Option

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> Dear Mr. Axelrod-

> I saw you on television this morning telling us how the President can

> live without the public option. Can you tell me how average, middle

> class Americans can live without it though? I have insurance- [REDACTED]

> [REDACTED]

> [REDACTED] I am draining down my

> savings to pay for healthcare. And yes, I have it good compared to

> most people, so many of whom are uninsured completely. Do you think

> once you've given up on the public option, industry will submit to any

> kind of stringent regulation or cost-controls?

> I wrote my first check to a politician to the President because I

> believed in him. Now he won't even stand up for us and seems to be,

> playing a politics of appeasement with Republicans, triangulation with

> those who voted for him in November and footsie with the healthy,

> insurance industry.

> He can be a hero for our times, the President who brought us real

> health care reform or he can be, well, a clone of Bill Clinton--not

> the one who "lost" health care reform, but the one who gave us welfare

> reform, and weakened the safety net for the poor that generations of

> Democrats, from FDR to Ted Kennedy struggled to build.

> Gregg

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> On Wed, Sep 2, 2009 at 6:25 AM, Gregg

> Gonsalves<[REDACTED]> wrote:

>> I know one voice from out beyond the Beltway doesn't matter in these

>> heady debates about health care, where political fortunes are

>> calculated almost in the abstract.

>> But on the slim chance that citizens have sway over those they elect

>> (and give money to!), I hope you can tell the President that dropping

>> a robust public option from his demands to Congress is a terrible

>> idea. He must include it in his upcoming speech to the American

>> people and tell people why it is important. He will have the support

>> of all of us who care about health care, depend on it.

>> I am on the public option of ADAP (the federal AIDS Drug Assistance

>> Program)--without a federal safety net for my health, I'd be spending

>> down my savings on the \$10,000 yearly course of antiretroviral

>> medicines I need to stay alive and would have to drop out of school to

>> go back to work to get private insurance (and still pay 80/20). Last

>> week, three dozen people in my apartment building met to discuss how

>> to support the President on health care. 90% of the people in the room

>> were senior citizens--they want Medicare for all. I am in school with

>> several veterans of the Iraq War--they get great care through the VA.

>> Private industry will always find a way out of serving the sick, the

>> old and the injured, even if they can't exclude them outright, through

>> high premiums, high deductibles and co-pays.

>> Do the right thing. I want President Obama to be the one who gave us

>> real health care reform--not something dressed up to look like it, but

>> the change we need. We will know the difference.

>> If he can deliver the real thing, then he goes down in history as the

>> one who did it after all others failed before him. Otherwise, we lose

>> the last great chance for reform in a generation and the political

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>> moment has been squandered. The choice of a legacy is his. Our fate

>> rests in your hands.

>> Good luck.

>> Gregg

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>> Gregg Gonsalves

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