

Labor Campaign for Single-Payer Healthcare Is A Right -- Not A Privilege

www.laborforsinglepayer.org

Sustaining the Movement for the 99% Statement by the Steering Committee of the Labor Campaign for Single-Payer

This autumn has been witness to an extraordinary moment in American history as the Occupy Wall Street movement swept the nation and gave voice to a widespread anger at corporate greed and raging inequality. With winter approaching, and more and more cities sending police to physically assault and clear out their outdoor encampments, it is time to take stock of the achievements and prospects of this movement.

From the start, the Labor Campaign for Single Payer has stood with the 99%. Our fight to win healthcare as a human right for everyone in America is part of this movement. Our victory depends on this movement becoming powerful enough to defeat the 1% who treat the people's health as just another source of profit and whose control of the political process stymies any real efforts at reform.

We stand with them because they have brought to light the vicious class war that is daily waged against working people and because they have boldly called on the American people to choose sides in this war. We stand with them because they have laid bare the links between the economic and political power of the 1% and the misery of the 99%.

As part of our campaign for healthcare for all, we will work to spread and sustain this movement. We have a particular interest and duty in working to facilitate strategic and mutually respectful relationships with the labor movement which has always stood in

the front lines of the war on the workers and has been under intensified assault for over thirty years. We believe that such relationships will create new synergies—providing institutional and organizational ballast to the Occupy movement while positioning labor as a social movement that speaks on behalf of all working people.

We recognize that the leaders of the future will emerge from this movement and that we must work to ensure that their voices are heard, their efforts supported and their skills sharpened and honed. Likewise, we must work to ensure that people of color and the working class, in all of its diversity, are represented at all levels of this movement.

As trade unionists, we often think in terms of the next contract or the next political campaign. But in this instance, we must resist any initiative to confine the scope and breadth of this movement. These issues go beyond the next election. If history has taught us anything, it is that we cannot run behind politicians. Rather, we need to get in front of them and set the terms of debate. This means that we must work to shift some of labor's still considerable resources towards building a long-term independent movement accountable to working people.

Of all the lessons learned—or re-learned—this fall, perhaps the most important is the absolute imperative to stop bargaining against ourselves. Too often, the labor movement has followed this path to marginalization and defeat. This is a time for bold initiatives. This is a time to stop apologizing for who we are and what we stand for.

The vision that has drawn so many Americans to support the Occupy movement is neither radical nor alien. It is an expression of the American Dream of opportunity, fairness and justice. It is not that different from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Second Bill of

Rights proposed nearly 70 years ago.

These goals should be within easy reach of one of the richest societies in the history of the world. They require only a political system responsive to the needs and concerns of the 99%. We need not be timid in calling for these things nor should we fear the certain counter-attack from the 1%. Rather, like FDR, we should welcome their hatred.

The Labor Campaign for Single Payer understands that the fight for healthcare is inextricably linked to the fight to defend and expand the social insurance model that underlies this American Dream. This model must include access to decent jobs, affordable housing and higher education as well as the unrestricted right to organize. All who share this dream are our allies. Those who oppose it are part of the conspiracy of the 1% who seek to transform our social rights into commodities for sale to the highest bidder.

As winter moves in, we pledge to do our part to help this movement create a new spring for working people everywhere. Consistent with our grassroots approach, we will work to educate and mobilize rank and file members and local union leaders. We will work to ensure that the labor movement at all levels fulfills its historic role in the fight for social and economic justice. We will insist that the movement for Medicare-for-All single-payer healthcare embraces an inclusive social insurance model.

We stand in solidarity with the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO who have called on all unions to treat the Occupy sites as if they were union picket lines and pledge support for any worker who refuses to break up, “raid” or confiscate belongings of protesters. “Protest movements, like strike lines, are not 9-5 activities,” the resolution reads. They need to operate “24 hours a day, on-site and with proper protection including food, medical supplies, water and tents.” We also encourage the Occupy

movement to explore new tactics to expand beyond the public square and into workplaces, college campuses and communities under direct economic assault by the 1%.

The stakes are high and we must rise to this moment. This is a time of tremendous opportunity. What we do this winter will help determine the fate of a movement that has been a long time coming.

“Let the people everywhere take heart of hope, for the cross is bending, the midnight is passing and joy cometh with the morning.” —Eugene V. Debs.