

Report on 1st Western Washington Single Payer Summit, 6/17/09

Last night's meeting demonstrated lots of enthusiasm and resolve to work together as we move ahead as quickly as possible during the critical next few weeks. 55 people signed the sign-in sheet, though I suspect a few missed it.

We were very lucky to have a skilled and experienced moderator/facilitator in Hal Stockbridge. He kept us moving the right direction, was very concerned to get everyone's two cents, and managed to get us to a place where we were pretty much satisfied that we accomplished something – a very difficult task for a first meeting of this large group of veteran and opinionated activists.

Unfortunately, the conference call facilities disappointed the 4 callers; the microphones did not function well in the large space we occupied.

The general thrust of the meeting was to get organizations that are committed to continuing to advocate for single payer as the gold standard to work together to build and amplify our strength and impact during this crucial period when Congress and the Administration are negotiating health care reform alternatives. The focus of our activities needs to be on our representatives and building grassroots support for the only real hope for achieving health care justice. That said, some of the organizations (such as WaCAN) and individuals will also continue to push for a Medicare-type public option, as outlined by the Congressional Progressive Democratic Caucus, but this can be done within other coalitions.

There was lots of discussion but I will only outline some of the general agreements as these will be refined by the Working Groups (see below) and discussed at the next general meeting. Attendees felt that in these critical times we should meet every week or two until a health care reform plan is finalized in Washington, DC. The next general meeting will be next Wednesday, June 24th, 7-9PM, at Swedish Cherry Hill Campus, in the SE Conference Center (James Tower), Room B.

Single Payer Resources in Western Washington – Organizations represented gave an estimate of established outreach by members or Email lists:

PNHPWW – 450

HCFA-Wa – 2500

UNHC – 1800

WHSC – Coalition of organizations

Wa Jobs with Justice – 5000
AAPN – 200
Wa Single Payer Action – 10
65th St Change Gang – 40
Island Co. Activists for SP – 35
OFA – 100 plus
WaCAN – 35,000 members statewide

Setting Goals and Priorities – We felt it important to set and prioritize short (<1 month) and long term (>1 month) goals. The Goals Working Group will work to develop and flesh out goals. From the meeting:

Short-term goals include:

- Solidify our single payer forces as an ongoing coalition
- Build functioning Working Groups
- Gain visibility for SP as “the solution”
- Develop a common message with materials to pass out
- Build our base through outreach
- Influence our representatives to sign on to HR. 676/1200, S. 703 (now the carrot, maybe later the stick)

Long-term goals include

- Build the grassroots
- “Inoculating” the grassroots against conservative media campaigns

Working Groups (Contact Info in Attachment)

The six Working Groups were charged with meeting before the next general meeting and presenting a plan for discussion.

Goals and Priorities – Don Mitchell, Dwight McCabe

See above

Action & Media – Linda Rohan, John Hiesfelter

Public demonstrations, rapid response to events, develop media contacts

Materials & Messaging – Martha Koestler, Larry Kalb

Common message, handouts, bumper stickers, yard signs, newspaper ads

Outreach– Dorli Rainey, David McLanahan

Tabling at community events, Anne Feeney concerts, speakers’ bureau

Influence Congress –Kathleen Randall, Judith Shattuck

Email & letters, personal visits to offices to meet reps, staff
Fundraising – Ken Fabert

We did not talk about a name for a new coalition or steering committee or whatever, so I will refer to it as the “Washington Action for Single Payer” Coalition (WASP) for the time being. In the next couple of days I will create a web page where SP advocacy opportunities and a calendar can be listed, as well as Working Group information.

Please let the Working Group leaders know if you would like to be part of the group. And, provide feedback and suggestions on anything.

Regards

David McLanahan
Coordinator, PNHPWW

Attachments and links:

WASP Email List

Sign Bernie Sander’s petition to Congress supporting SP

<http://sanders.senate.gov/petitions/index.cfm?uid=7fd59f2e-88e1-477a-8eaf-762a5b050809>

Vote for Single Payer in Wa State Democrats poll

<http://wa-democrats.org/index.php?page=display&id=494>