

## NATIONAL COVERAGE OF HCAN LAUNCH EVENTS JULY 8

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[www.nytimes.com/2008/07/11/opinion/11krugman.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/11/opinion/11krugman.html)

OP-ED COLUMNIST

# Kennedy's Big Day

By PAUL KRUGMAN

Published: July 11, 2008

**It was the worst of days, it was the best of days. On Wednesday, Senate Democrats capitulated to the Bush administration on wiretapping — with Barack Obama joining the coalition of the craven.**

**Later that day, however, those same Senate Democrats won a huge victory on Medicare. News reports stressed the cinematic quality of the event: Ted Kennedy, who is fighting a brain tumor, made a dramatic appearance on the Senate floor, casting the decisive vote amid cheers from his colleagues. (Only one senator was absent: John McCain.)**

**But the vote was bigger than the theatrics. It was the first major health care victory that Democrats have won in a long time. And it was enormously encouraging for advocates of universal health care.**

**Ostensibly, Wednesday's vote was about restoring cuts in Medicare payments to doctors. What it was really about, however, was the fight against creeping privatization. Democrats finally took a stand — and, thanks to Senator Kennedy, seem to have prevailed.**

**The story really begins in 2003, when the Bush administration rammed the Medicare Modernization Act through Congress, literally in the dead of night. That bill established large de facto subsidies for Medicare Advantage plans — plans in which Medicare funds are funneled through private insurance companies, rather than directly paying for care.**

**Since then, enrollment in these plans has been growing rapidly. This has had a destructive effect on Medicare's finances: the fastest-growing type of Medicare Advantage plan, private fee-for-service, costs taxpayers 17 percent more per beneficiary than Medicare without the middleman. It also threatens to undermine Medicare's universality, turning it into a system in which insurance companies cherry-pick healthier and more affluent older Americans, leaving the sicker and poorer behind.**

**What does this have to do with cuts in doctors' fees? Well, legislation passed a decade ago makes such cuts automatic whenever the growth in Medicare spending exceeds an unrealistically low target. This year, the automatic cuts would have reduced doctors' payments by more than 10 percent, a pay reduction so deep that many physicians would probably have stopped taking Medicare patients.**

**In previous years, payments to doctors were maintained through bipartisan fudging: politicians from both parties got together to waive the rules. In effect, Congress kept Medicare functioning by expanding the federal budget deficit.**

**This year, the Democratic leadership decided, instead, to link the "doctor fix" to the fight**

against privatization and offered a bill that maintains doctors' payments while reining in those expensive private fee-for-service plans. Last month, the Senate took up this bill — but Democrats failed by one vote to override a Republican filibuster. And that seemed to be that: soon after that vote, Senators Max Baucus and Charles Grassley had another bipartisan fudge all ready to go.

But then Democratic leaders decided to play brinkmanship. They let the doctors' cuts stand for the Fourth of July holiday, daring Republicans to threaten the basic medical care of millions of Americans rather than give up subsidies to insurance companies. Over the recess period, there was an intense lobbying war between insurance companies and doctors.

And when the Senate came back in session, it turned out that the doctors — and the Democrats — had won: Senator Kennedy was there to cast the extra vote needed to break the filibuster, a number of Republicans switched sides and the bill passed with a veto-proof majority.

If the Democrats can win victories like this now, they should be able to put a definitive end to the privatization of Medicare next year, when they're virtually certain to have a larger Congressional majority and will probably hold the White House.

More than that, however, advocates of universal health care, like Health Care for America Now, the new group headlined by Elizabeth Edwards, have to be very encouraged by this week's events.

Here's how it will play out, if all goes well: early next year, President Obama will send his health care plan to Congress. The plan will face vociferous opposition from the insurance industry — but the Medicare vote suggests that this time, unlike in 1993, Democrats will hold together.

Unless Democrats win even bigger than expected, however, they won't have the 60 Senate votes needed to override a filibuster. What the Medicare fight shows is that the Democrats could nonetheless prevail by taking their case to the public, daring their opponents to stand in the way of health care security — so that in the end they get some Republicans to switch sides, and get the legislation through.

A lot can still go wrong with this vision. But the odds of achieving universal health care, soon, look a lot higher than they did just a couple of weeks ago.

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[http://www.salon.com/politics/war\\_room/2008/07/09/progressives\\_health/index.html?source=refresh](http://www.salon.com/politics/war_room/2008/07/09/progressives_health/index.html?source=refresh)

WAR ROOM

By Alex Koppelman

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2008 13:17 EDT

## **Progressives push healthcare**

Progressive healthcare wonks are haunted by memories of 1994, when the last major effort in Congress to enact something approaching universal healthcare, the Clinton health plan, went down in flames.

Some blamed the plan's design, or the secretive process that created it, for the fiasco. But there's no question another key factor was that the Clintons and their allies were outgunned on the public relations front, thanks to an insurance-industry-funded campaign that famously filled the airwaves with those "Harry and Louise" ads.

As Ezra Klein [explains](#) in his blog at the American Prospect today, an impressive array of progressive labor and advocacy groups are already coming together to plan and execute a pre- and post-election push for universal healthcare. Called Health Care for America Now, the coalition is broad and deep:

The primary partners -- which is to say, those who put up \$500,000 to join -- include The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Americans United for Change, Campaign for America's Future, Center for American Progress Action Fund, Center for Community Change, MoveOn.org, National Education Association, National Women's Law Center, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Service Employees International Union, United Food and Commercial Workers, and USAction. Within that list are old guard groups like Labor and new wave organizations like MoveOn. Both Change to Win and the AFL-CIO are represented. Standing behind them are a much larger list of coalition partners that include the American Nurses Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Women's Law Center. It's about as broad a progressive coalition as you can imagine, and exactly what didn't exist in 1994. They've already raised \$40 million, have already run one major political ad and have already begun to deploy organizers in key congressional districts. Just as important, they plan to continue the initiative long after the electoral dust settles; totally aside from Health Care for America Now, SEIU has already pledged \$75 million to long-range efforts to enact universal healthcare.

As Klein notes, the campaign for universal healthcare won't necessarily be any easier than it was in 1994. But "you're looking at a simply fearsome organizing drive. It may, of course, prove insufficient. But unlike in 1994, it won't be non-existent. And that's a huge, and promising, difference."

— *Ed Kilgore*

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<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2008/07/08/1187488.aspx>

## HEALTH CARE GROUP LAUNCHES

Posted: Tuesday, July 08, 2008 2:47 PM by Domenico Montanaro Filed Under: 2008

### From NBC's Alex Wall

WASHINGTON -- A coalition of left-leaning groups launched a \$40 million campaign aimed at pressuring the next president and Congress to pass comprehensive health care reform in 2009, representatives of the group, Health Care for America Now, announced today in a news conference at the National Press Club.

The group's president, Richard Kirsch, said the campaign will kick off today in 52 cities across the country and has the support of more than 100 national and state-based groups that represent labor, community organizations, doctors, nurses, women, small businesses, faith-based organizations, minority groups, Netroots activists and think tanks.

"We are here today to announce a new movement in America," Kirsch said. "We are committed to working together to provide affordable, high quality health care."

Kirsch emphasized that the group's goal is to "mobilize millions of Americans to demand that the first order of business of the next President and Congress is to enact quality, affordable health care for all in 2009."

Kirsch said the campaign will be asking every member of Congress to declare whether they are "on our side or the side of the health insurance industry."

**No endorsement of Obama's or McCain's plans:** Kirsch said the group has not endorsed any particular plan, but will fight for a plan that incorporates the campaign's core principles. Its principles include creating a system where no one is left out, affordability, choice between private and public plans, a national standard of health benefits covered and equity in health care access for "communities of color."

**Campaign ad:** The group also released an ad today that highlights

Americans' frustration with the health insurance agency and calls for immediate action. "Americans know that we cannot trust the health care industry to clean up the mess," Kirsch said. The group plans to spend \$25 million in paid media over the next five months.

Also speaking at the event were Gerald McEntee (AFSCME), Anna Burger (SEIU), Jeff Blum (USAction, executive director), Reg Weaver (NEA president), Joseph Hansen (UFCW), David White (mechanic shop owner), David T. Tayloe, Jr., MD (American Academy of Pediatrics), Cecile Richards (Planned Parenthood), Marcia Greenberger (NWLC) and Eli Pariser (MoveOn), who all threw their organizations' support behind the campaign.

Kirsch stressed that this "vast coalition" highlights a key difference between this campaign and attempts at health care reform in the early 90s. He cited the "Harry and Louise" ad from that time period as proof that times have changed.

"What's different now...we didn't have as big of a national campaign [as we do now]," Kirsch said. "There's a hunger for this change."

Elizabeth **Edwards**, who was supposed to speak at the press conference but instead attended late Sen. Jesse **Helms'** funeral, issued the following statement:

"Millions of Americans are sitting around their kitchen table at night, wondering why it is so difficult to afford the basics these days -- especially health care. They come from all walks of life, but they have one thing in common: they know our health care system is broken, and they want a fair, common-sense solution that makes quality coverage affordable for everyone. Our mission is to make sure their voices get heard in Washington D.C., and everywhere else."

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<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN08296804>

# Coalition to lobby for U.S. health-care reform

Tue Jul 8, 2008 1:59pm EDT

WASHINGTON, July 8 (Reuters) - A coalition of unions, think tanks and other groups launched an advertising campaign on Tuesday saying they want to ensure that health-care reform tops the U.S. political agenda after the November elections.

The group, Health Care for America Now, said it had the backing of 100 labor groups, community organizations, medical groups and activists.

The non-profit group is headquartered on Washington's K Street, known for its high-powered lobbyists, and said it was immediately starting a \$1.5 million advertising campaign on television, newspapers and online, with an eventual spending goal of \$40 million.

"This is the human rights movement of our time," said Jeff Blum, executive director of USAction, a non-profit that campaigns for strengthening of Medicare, Social Security and other entitlements.

"If there is one thing that our government should be guaranteeing each one of us, it is the basic, fundamental right to affordable and quality health care. This must be the birthright of every American."

Some of the groups backing the organization include the National Education Association, the National Women's Law Center, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and the Service Employees International Union, which represents health-care workers among others.

By any measure, health-care reform is among the top issues concerning American voters.

Republican presidential candidate Sen. John McCain of Arizona and Democratic candidate Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois say they are putting together health-care reform plans.

Other groups have too, including retailers, employers and labor unions. The United States has no single health-care system but relies on a patchwork of private, public and

employer-sponsored insurance plans -- and 47 million Americans lack any coverage.

The new group says it wants to keep the best of what already exists, without moving to a fully nationalized system.

"Americans can keep the private insurance they have, join a new private insurance plan, or choose a public health insurance plan," the group said in a statement.

"The campaign also calls for a government role in setting and enforcing rules on the insurance industry which consistently charges whatever it wants, sets high deductibles, denies coverage based on pre-existing conditions, and drops coverage when people get sick."

(Reporting by Maggie Fox, editing by Will Dunham and Eric Beech)

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<http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalradar/2008/07/40-mill-health.html>

## \$40 Mill Health Care Reform Campaign Launches

July 08, 2008 7:02 PM

ABC News' Molly Hunter Reports: Health Care For America NOW, a new grassroots movement working to bring affordable healthcare to Americans, announced its launch at the National Press Club in Washington Tuesday.

The \$40 million campaign will spend \$1.5 million on their first round of national TV, print and online advertising and an additional \$25 million in paid media over the next five months.

"We are here today to announce the beginning of a new movement in the United States," Campaign Director Richard Kirsch said in an announcement made simultaneously in 52 U.S. cities.

The first TV ad which airs on cable and illustrates the organization's strong opposition to the current health care system.

"We can't trust insurance companies to fix the healthcare mess," states the ad.

Health Care For America NOW is a coalition of over 100 organizations and unions. Many leaders of high profile organizations and unions including the American

Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, SEIU, AFL-CIO, United Food and Commercial Workers, Campaign for America's Future, Center for American Progress Action Fund, MoveOn.org and Planned Parenthood Federation of America were present in DC to speak at the launch.

Together with these organizations Health Care For America NOW "will mobilize millions of Americans to demand that the first order of business of the next President and Congress is to enact quality, affordable health care for all in 2009," Kirsch said. The campaign does not plan to endorse either presidential candidate or a specific health care plan.

Sen. John McCain's, R-Ariz., health care plan provides tax credits of \$5,000 for families in order to buy health insurance, and Sen. Barack Obama's, D-Ill., plan mandates coverage for children and requires that employers share the cost of their employees' health coverage.

Kirsch challenges each American to make a choice.

"We will be asking Members of Congress this year to tell us if they are on our side or the side of the health insurance industry," he said.

Health Care for America NOW suggests three options to achieve universal health coverage. Individuals can stay with the private insurance they already have, join a new private insurance plan or choose a public health insurance plan.

"We are looking for a uniquely American solution," Kirsch said. "In our vision of healthcare reform, the government works for us."

The campaign aims to find a solution that is affordable for both people and businesses alike. USAction Executive Director, Jeff Blum, called the campaign, "the human rights movement of our time."

Leaders of the organizations echoed Kirsch and Blum's sentiments, calling for urgent and forceful healthcare reform.

Gerald McEntee, the International President of AFSCME, stated: "Today, we say enough is enough! No more needless delays. No more idle discussion. No more political posturing. We've talked long enough, we need action!"

Roger Hickey, co-Director of the Campaign for America's Future opted out of his prepared statement, instead saying, "Enough has been said, we are

proud to be part of this coalition and we think we need to get on with the agenda. Let's move it!"

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[http://blog.washingtonpost.com/the-trail/2008/07/08/democrats\\_gear\\_up\\_new\\_push\\_for.html](http://blog.washingtonpost.com/the-trail/2008/07/08/democrats_gear_up_new_push_for.html)

## Democrats Gear Up New Push for Universal Health Care

*By Perry Bacon Jr.*

Democrats are launching an aggressive push for universal health care, fourteen years after a failed attempt on the issue resulted in political disaster.

A coalition of liberal groups that includes major labor unions such as the Service Employees International Union and the activist group MoveOn.org announced today it will spend \$40 million to make health insurance a major issue in the campaign, with Elizabeth Edwards, the wife of former Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards, as the one of the group's main spokespersons. The group, which has dubbed itself "Health Care for America Now!" plans to spend its money running ads in battleground states, canvassing 45 states to get people to sign petitions supporting the initiative and trying to get every member of Congress to sign a pledge to expand health insurance to all Americans.

Meanwhile, on Capitol Hill, Democratic staffers are trying to set up a structure for getting a bill through Congress next year.

The staffs of Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), who heads the Senate's Health, Education Pensions and Labor Committee, are already meeting with key health care experts, including some from Massachusetts, which passed a landmark health care law two years ago.

In a series of meetings over the next month, Senate aides plan to meet with doctors' groups, insurance companies, business associations and other key players in reforming health care. Their goal is to have the outlines of a health care proposal by the end of this year that can be introduced in the opening days of the next president's administration.

"We want to create a mandate," said Richard Kirsch, one of the leaders of the health care organization of the liberal groups, many of whom worked together to oppose President Bush's 2005 Social Security plan.

Barack Obama has already pledged to make passing health care reform a centerpiece of his first term, and his campaign has recently added a group of advisers who specialize in the subject, including Elizabeth Edwards, Sarah Bianchi, a former Clinton White House aide and Neera Tanden, Hillary Clinton's policy director during the primaries. Tanden is working as a domestic policy adviser, while Bianchi and Edwards are participating in campaign conference calls on health care with other experts.

"It's important for this to be one of the first things that's considered," Edwards said in an interview, referring to the priorities of a new administration. "I'd like to see it on the agenda in 2009."

The coalition of liberal groups is hoping to make sure health care is a priority even if John McCain is elected and to make sure the majority of Congress backs the goal as well.

McCain has also said he would make health care a major issue if he wins the presidency, but Democrats and labor groups oppose many of his proposals, as the Arizona senator is trying to transform the health care system into one in which individuals buy their own health care in a less-regulated market, which means they could have lower costs but also would assume more risk.

The new coalition, while not outlining a specific health care plan, has goals that resembled what Obama and the Democratic candidates proposed in the primaries, offering subsidies to people so health insurance is affordable to the 47 million Americans who currently don't have it, creating new regulations that would prevent insurance companies from charging high prices or not offering insurance to people who already have chronic illnesses and allowing people to either buy insurance from a private company like Kaiser or enroll in a government-managed health care plan that would be run like but separate from Medicare.

But, even if Obama were elected, there's no broad agreement on exactly how a universal health care bill would work, which is the problem Democrats faced in 1993 when the Clintons pushed the issue. Insurance companies, who drove much of the opposition in 1993, have signaled they would not support an approach like Obama's, which add regulations for them but does not require all people to purchase health insurance. Democratic Senate aides are pointing to the legislation passed in Massachusetts in 2006 as a model. That legislation included increased subsidies for low-income people but also a mandate that all people in the state purchase insurance, something Obama has railed against on the campaign trail.

A bipartisan coalition that now includes more than a dozen senators is pushing a more radical health care reform in which people would buy coverage directly from insurance companies instead of getting it through their employers, with people getting tax credits to buy insurance in a more-tightly regulated system. Obama advisers had earlier largely ruled out that idea as too much of a drastic change for the vast majority of Americans who currently get their insurance through their employer.

While Obama has suggested ending tax cuts for people who make more than \$250,000 a year to fund the health care subsidies, few Republicans will back what is effectively a tax increase, and some members of the GOP would likely need to support an agreement so it could pass in the Senate.

"It's much easier to oppose something than get something passed," Kirsch admitted.

Posted at 4:12 PM ET on [Jul 8, 2008](#)

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<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/07/03/new-health-reform-group-to-spend-40-million/>

July 3, 2008, 1:45 am

# New Health Reform Group to Spend \$40 Million

By JULIE BOSMAN

It could be a version of the “Harry and Louise” television commercial that helped kill Hillary Rodham Clinton’s health care plan in 1994, only this time, it will be in favor of reform.

A national advertisement by the newly formed group Health Care for America Now, to be released on Tuesday, will take on insurance companies and argue for comprehensive, affordable health care in the United States, a spokeswoman for the group said Wednesday.

Its theme? “You can’t trust the insurance industry to fix the health care mess,” said the spokeswoman, Jacki Schechner. “We’re educating the public about our principles and what we’d like to see from the president and the new Congress.”

Health Care for America Now, an umbrella group of labor unions, health care organizations and liberal activists, said Wednesday that it would spend \$40 million to promote affordable health care.

And it has chosen Elizabeth Edwards as its most visible public face. Mrs. Edwards, the wife of former Senator John Edwards of North Carolina, will speak at the group’s inaugural event at the National Press Club in Washington on Tuesday.

After making an initial buy of \$1.5 million for national television, print and online advertisements, the coalition said it would pour \$25 million into additional advertising. The first commercial will run in national newspapers, on CNN and MSNBC and online.

The presence of Mrs. Edwards, an outspoken liberal activist and health care advocate, could give fund-raising efforts a boost. Mrs. Edwards, who has incurable cancer, has made health care her signature issue since Mr. Edwards dropped out of the Democratic presidential race in January.

On its Web site, [cancampaign.org](http://cancampaign.org), the group is described as a “grass-roots movement” for affordable health care. It includes MoveOn, Planned Parenthood, the Campaign for America’s Future and the Service Employees International Union.

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[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121504848440025247.html?mod=googlenews\\_wsj](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121504848440025247.html?mod=googlenews_wsj)

## Big-Spending Groups Enter Campaign Fray

BY BRAD HAYNES

*Word Count: 439*

As Democrats and Republicans gear up for the general election, a string of interest groups are launching their own campaigns to elect candidates who support their agendas.

A coalition of liberal organizations will announce plans next week to spend \$40 million this election cycle to promote health-care reform and candidates backing the group's proposals. The interest group, Health Care for America Now, is the latest to unveil an issue-based campaign to influence the November election, and its budget makes it one of the largest.

These independent groups are ...

[http://blogs.wsj.com/health/2008/07/03/elizabeth-edwards-a-40-million-push-for-health-coverage/?mod=googlenews\\_wsj](http://blogs.wsj.com/health/2008/07/03/elizabeth-edwards-a-40-million-push-for-health-coverage/?mod=googlenews_wsj)

July 3, 2008, 10:31 am

## Elizabeth Edwards & a \$40 Million Push for Health Coverage

Posted by Jacob Goldstein

Elizabeth Edwards. Photo: Associated Press

A new group called [Health Care for America Now](#) is set to pour \$40 million into a campaign-related push for universal health insurance.

The group is officially nonpartisan, but its policy slant clearly falls on the Democratic side of the political fence — and its “headliner,” as [Politico.com](#) puts it, is Elizabeth Edwards, [cancer patient](#) and wife of former presidential candidate John Edwards.

The effort is backed by a coalition that includes the big unions Service Employees International Union and the AFL-CIO. A planned \$25 million ad campaign is set to launch next week.

It is one of several “issue groups” that will be spending lots of money in the coming months. As [this morning's WSJ notes](#), campaign finance reforms passed in 2002 prompted many political donors to start giving money to groups other than candidates and political parties, because those donations remain largely unregulated.

But that doesn't mean the issue groups don't get involved in politics. “We're asking members of Congress and candidates, ‘Whose side are you on?’” the Health Care for America Now's spokeswoman told the WSJ.

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