

The Valley Pg. 4  
Voice July 15, 1991

# Commentary

## Re:HR 2530--The Sanders' National Health Care Proposal

I recently introduced legislation in the Congress to establish a Canadian style health care system in this country. My bill, HR 2530, would guarantee health care to every American without out-of-pocket expense. It will mean that, when illness strikes, every American can go to a doctor or enter a hospital without pulling out a wallet or checkbook or reading the fine print on an insurance policy.

Everywhere in Vermont, I hear this message: The present health care system is failing. People tell me this at town meetings, union halls, senior centers. Working people and small businesspeople, people who are ill and the doctors who treat them, all say the same. "Bernie...get the people in Washington to do something about our health care system. It isn't working."

During the last few months, at hearings on health care in the state. Vermonters appear very knowledgeable. They know that over eighty million Americans either have no health insurance or are only partially insured.

They understand that despite Medicare, seniors often pay a large part of their limited incomes for prescriptions and other health care needs. They recognize that Medicaid

covers a smaller and smaller percentage of the poor and the U.S. ranks 22nd among industrialized nations in preventing infant mortality.

Finally, many know that although this country spends more than any other on health care, Americans don't live as long as citizens in 11 other nations!

How is it we spend much more per capita but still do not have healthier infants or live longer lives than citizens of other countries? How can we spend 40 % more than Canada and still not receive the universal comprehensive coverage that Canadians get?

Simple. We waste over \$100 billion annually by paying for most health care through private companies of which there are about 1500.

Their duplication, reduplication of billing and administration services, profit-taking, waste and inefficiency, costs over \$100 billion more than a single payer, Canadian-style system, says the Physicians for National Health Care study. The U.S. Congress General Accounting office, using older data and more conservative assumptions, estimates savings of \$67 billion through a single payer system.

So, if we get rid of all the private

health insurance companies, we could provide health care to all Americans, at a cost not one penny higher than we are now paying for health care for only some Americans!

My plan-HR 2530-is good. It works like this:

1)Provide increased federal funding for states establishing a single payer, universal, comprehensive health care system.

2)It will be state-administered and provide basic health care to all Americans without out-of-pocket expenses. Patients may choose doctors and hospitals. Physicians' fees will be set jointly by the doctors and the state. Hospitals will receive their funds based on statewide budget planning.

3)As in Canada, the system will be funded through the general tax base on state and federal levels. The bill calls for 7.7% surtax on corporate and personal income taxes at federal level increasing taxes by 0 to 2% of income. Each state will set up its own taxation method to replace insurance premiums and out-of-pocket expenses.

At first in Congress six months ago, I was told its leadership did not think health care a major American issue. Now that body realizes that health care

is perhaps the most important issue for all Americans. I believe I have helped change that attitude—health care now is under serious discussion in Congress.

We are only one of two industrialized nations not guaranteeing health care to all without out-of-pocket expense.

HR 2530 assures health care to all as a right of citizenship, not as a privilege of wealth.

Presently, the insurance and pharmaceutical companies, the medical equipment suppliers and certain physicians' groups support the present system because they are making billions from it.

Such groups are powerful and heavy contributors to congressional campaigns. It will not succeed unless tens of millions of Americans fight for this national system.

I believe momentum is growing for a national health care system in the U.S. I would appreciate your support for this legislation.

For more information about HR2530, contact my office at 191 Bank St., Burlington (VT.) or call 862-0697.

*Bernie Sanders, ex-mayor of Burlington, Vt., represents Vermont in the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C.*

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