



This is it! Talking Points to Push Health Care Reform Over the Finish Line

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This document contains many messages for a variety of audiences, divided into sections. If you have specific questions, contact Jennifer Collier (jcollier@communitycatalyst.org, 617-275-2805) or Reena Singh (rsingh@communitycatalyst.org, 617-275-2854).

Top Line Messages

- This is it!
- We must pass comprehensive health care reform now; the consequences of doing nothing are too dire.
- Special interests cannot be allowed to get in the way of the health care reform that Americans so badly need.
- We need Congress to finish the work it started: stand up for families and pass comprehensive health care reform legislation now.

Make Sure You Are Heard – focus on your audience

Choose the best message:

You know your audience and your delegation best. For Congress, we have provided a wide array of messages from which you can select the right tone and focus that will resonate with your representative and senators.

Choose the best messenger:

Find the right spokesperson to deliver the right message. Reach out within your networks to faith leaders, small business owners, seniors, families with children who have special health care needs, and providers. These messages can be tailored to the messenger and the special perspective she/he brings to the issue of health care reform.

Make it personal:

The best counter to any argument against passing this bill now is a real story. They work with any audience. For example, if you're meeting with a Member of Congress, use what you know about your delegation's priorities and then use the real-life examples you've gathered to drive home the message, "[NAME] cannot wait. [SHE/HE] needs you to vote for health care reform now."

Include meaningful statistics:

Remind your Members of Congress what reform will mean for his/her state and district.

XXX people in [STATE/DISTRICT] are uninsured.

XXX families in [STATE/DISTRICT] have children with special needs who need health care reform.

XXX seniors in [STATE/DISTRICT] need you to close the Medicare Part D doughnut hole and make their prescriptions more affordable.

XXX small business owners in [STATE/DISTRICT] are looking for your leadership to pass reform that will make it possible for them to insure themselves and their workers and still expand their businesses.

The Differences Between the President's Plan and the Republican Plan

- The President's proposal gives Americans more control over their health insurance and their health care by holding insurance companies more accountable – this is the core difference between the President's plan and the Republican's.
 - We believe that insurance companies should be regulated and the Republicans do not.
 - We want to assure that health care is between people and their doctors as opposed to letting the insurance companies do whatever they want including using pre-existing conditions, raising rates 39%, or setting lifetime caps.
- The President's plan will end bad insurance company practices, allow individuals and small businesses to buy the same insurance as Congress, and it will bring down costs.
- The President's proposal will make health insurance more affordable for small businesses and individuals, covering 31 million people who cannot afford health insurance today. The Republican plan will only cover 3 million people.

About the Legislative Process (only if you must – we encourage you respond as necessary and then immediately pivot back to what reform will do for the American people)

- We agree with the President that we should have an up or down vote with majority rule – that's democracy.
- It is wrong to let a phony argument about process get in the way of making the reforms we need to make to hold the insurance industry accountable and provide health security for all Americans.
- That's how No Child Left Behind, the Children's Health Insurance Program, two wars and the largest tax cuts in history were all passed. These all had to pass Congress with nothing more than a simple majority.
- Congress has discussed health care reform for over a year, held countless committee hearings, debated and voted in House and Senate, and discussed for over 7 hours before the American public. It is time for up or down vote – the American people deserve that.

General Messages for the Public

- Comprehensive health care reform legislation will give families peace of mind because it guarantees that their insurance will not be taken away, even if they lose a job or their health status changes.
- In the past year, our government provided access to health care for 4 million more American children, expanded care provided by rural community health centers, and guaranteed that people who lose a job and health insurance can keep affordable COBRA coverage.
- Small businesses are the key to economic growth and recovery, but rising health care costs hamper entrepreneurial efforts. We need comprehensive health reform legislation that provides tax credits to small business owners to finally make insurance affordable which will encourage business development and growth.
- This is it! The status quo is not an option. Runaway health care costs are bankrupting our families, our businesses, and our country. We must reform our health care system now so that it works for all Americans.
- Comprehensive health reform will crack down on insurers who deny people care when they have pre-existing conditions or drop people when they are sick. It will improve care for children with special health care needs, strengthen Medicare and help seniors struggling to pay for their medications and support small business owners.

General Messages for House and Senate Members

- America is the land of opportunity, but the lack of health security in our country undermines that promise. We must reform the health care system now.
- America's hospitals and doctors are the best in the world, but our health care system still leaves many families physically and financially unhealthy. Today, health care costs too much, medical debt bankrupts too many hard-working families, and too many people are denied insurance.
- The [CMS report released](#) February 4 shows that national health care spending jumped the largest hike in a single year – to 17.3 percent of our economy – yet people in our communities are not healthier. The status quo is unacceptable and unsustainable.
- While Americans are fed up with the long and complicated legislative process, support remains high for reform and its provisions which will meet the needs of your constituents today.
- This is it! Our health care system is broken, and it is only getting worse. You can make a difference. The time for change is now.

- The President and both chambers have done the hard work toward crafting reform that would rein in insurance companies, cover everyone and control costs; it is time to pull together to finish the job and get a bill to the President.

Progressives

- We need a health care system that works for the American people, not special interests.
- Health care is more than a political issue; it is a personal, everyday issue that impacts the lives and livelihood of your constituents. They still critically need health care reform.
- Though the final bill will not be perfect, you have the opportunity to work with your colleagues in both chambers and on both sides of the aisle to improve the lives of millions of families today and to provide a strong base on which to build in the future.
- Great social initiatives, including Social Security and Medicare, were not perfect when they passed, but they are popular programs today that provide crucial support in our society. Without Medicare, 40 million seniors would lack insurance. We can pass health care reform today that will insure millions more hard-working Americans.
- This is it! We must pass a comprehensive bill now to help future generations of Americans. We have overcome too many obstacles, fought too hard and gotten too far to turn back now. Your constituents and people across the country are counting on you.
- Passage of comprehensive health care reform legislation will be a moral victory that generations of Americans will celebrate. When reform passes and families and small businesses see the changes it brings, they will rally around reform and those who made it happen.
- If this herculean effort to reform the health care system doesn't succeed, you will be open to attacks for voting for the [HOUSE/SENATE] bill but failing to accomplish the task. You can restore public faith in the ability of the government to make its citizen's lives better, to look out for the interests of your constituents, and to protect them from the greedy special interests that are fighting this bill.
- Your constituents want and need you to deliver on comprehensive health care reform. This is it!

Fiscally Conservative Members of the House and Senate

- Runaway health care costs are bankrupting our families, our businesses and our government. We need comprehensive legislation that will control skyrocketing annual health care cost increases, which is essential to fixing our national economy.
- Health care costs take too much from families' budgets and from businesses' bottom lines. If we do not pass health care reform, costs will continue to increase, hindering

small businesses' ability to flourish. Without support, small businesses will not succeed, employees will not see a rise in wages, businesses will not expand and our economy will not recover.

- We need comprehensive legislation that will finally make insurance affordable, so small business owners can insure their families and their employees. Small businesses are the key to economic growth and recovery, but under the status quo health care costs hamper innovation and entrepreneurial efforts.
- We need to focus on the short- and long-term gains comprehensive legislation will bring to our families and our businesses that cannot wait for reform. This is it! We are asking you to work now to finalize legislation that would rein in insurance companies, cover everyone and control costs; it is time to pull together to finish the job and get a bill to the President.

Moderates

- Americans need comprehensive legislation that will provide health security and peace of mind. Families need freedom from anxiety about the stability of their health care plans and escalating health care costs.
- Americans want the peace of mind of knowing they won't lose their health insurance if they lose their jobs. They want to know they can always go to the doctor, receive the quality care they need when they need it, and afford the final bill.
- The reform options currently on the table will make a difference in the lives of children and adults with pre-existing conditions who will no longer be denied coverage; seniors who will no longer have to struggle to pay for their medications; and small business owners who will be able to afford to insure themselves and their employees.
- Both chambers have done the hard work to craft and pass comprehensive health care reform that will rein in insurance companies, cover everyone and control costs. We must get the job done
- This is it! The millions of Americans without insurance need this bill so they are guaranteed access to good health insurance that is affordable for them and their families.

Response to 'break it into smaller pieces' or 'let's start over'

- The status quo is unacceptable, and the broken health care system must be repaired. Real people need real help now. If piecemeal legislation were easy – or even possible – would 45,000 Americans die prematurely each year because they lack insurance?
- The current proposals on the table are strong and have interconnecting pieces. A lot of good work has been done in both chambers to get to this point, and history shows that this isn't easy. We simply cannot scrap the work we've done and start over. We need to move forward through the bipartisan meetings called for by President Obama, and we must work to improve the legislation over time.

- The legislation crafted in the House and the Senate will help people with pre-existing conditions, children with special health care needs, seniors struggling to pay for their medications, and small business owners. The bills stabilize families' finances, reduce the risk of medical debt and provide peace of mind to Americans across the country.
- We should not settle for less. We must pass a comprehensive bill and improve the health care system for millions of Americans now.
- This is it! We are within reach of an historic achievement, and we cannot turn back now. We cannot lose this chance to reform the health care system in a comprehensive way.

