

THE PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS ON HEALTH CARE

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Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Thank you very much, Representative Ellison.

Let me, first of all, commend you for the leadership that you continue to display as the message leader for the Progressive Caucus. I see you here every week and oftentimes Representative Edwards is here with you. So I'm pleased to join you and her and Representative McDermott, with whom I serve on the Ways and Means Committee, and I know that Chairman Rangel was here a few minutes ago and others.

You know, as I listened to Representative Edwards and as she talked about the winners and the losers, it is amazing that individuals in the health care arena are earning these kind of salaries, and that people are able to somehow or another not want to pay, and people somehow or another don't want to add a few extra dollars.

I come from a county with over 5 million people, and unfortunately, many of them are low income. They are poor. Many of them don't have any insurance at all. They don't have any way to access care, any way to be taken care of. Some of them go to emergency rooms of hospitals that are as many as 8 and 10 miles away in an urban area, and they can't get there.

To think that we now have an opportunity to reform, in a real way, health care delivery and to create the kind of health care delivery system that says that all of our citizens have worth, I don't know how those who are opposing a public option, I don't even know how you could begin to talk seriously about reforming our health care delivery system without a public option.

I have sat through the many hearings that we have had in Ways and Means. I have sat through countless hours of discussions with staff and experts. No matter what we come up with, we know that we need a robust, not a minuscule, not a weak, not an anemic public option, but we need a real public option, one that can help build upon the network of community health centers that we have spread across the country, which have proven to be worth their weight in gold, which have proven that they can deliver first-rate health and medical care in a cost-efficient way with individuals who understand the language, the culture, and the lifestyles of the people who come.

I agree with the Progressive Caucus members, as well as others, that there just ought not to be a plan without a serious public option.

Again, I want to commend both of you for the tremendous leadership that you continue to display. I know with the kind of attention and care that you give to these issues, that our Congress and our people are going to be in good shape for many years to come.

So, it has been a pleasure for me to stop by and to join with you and have a few words to say. Of course, you know, I remember a term we used to use a lot back in the sixties and seventies. We used to say ``a luta continua," meaning that the struggle must continue and we will conquer, without a doubt. If we dare to struggle, we dare to win.

Thank you so much. It is a pleasure to be here.

Mr. ELLISON. Let me thank you again, Congressman Davis. You have been putting it out there for so long. There are 57 Members who insist upon a robust public option. It is wonderful to count you among one of those. I think the American people can rest assured there are people in this Congress who are sticking up for their interests and fighting for them, and your leadership in that regard is inspirational. Thank you, sir.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Thank you very much.