

# Democratic Socialists of America Greater Detroit Local



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## DSA Healthcare Resolution

The battle for universal health care legislation is at a critical point. In the House of Representatives, draft legislation will be made public next week and hearings are intended to start the week of June 22, concluding in early July. House committees will begin writing legislation the week of July 13, and the House leadership intends to put legislation before the full chamber for floor consideration the week of July 27. A Senate schedule is not available, but is expected to be very similar, with the leadership of both branches of Congress wanting a national health care bill passed by the August recess. Reconciliation of the House and Senate versions of the health care bill will be taken up when Congress reconvenes after Labor Day.

The rhetorical battle over the issues will be similar in both the Senate and the House. Given that the House is more liberal, we expect the strongest bill to emerge in the House, yet we dare not ignore any aspect of this legislative struggle.

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## Say No to Big Mac

McDonald's says NO to workers' rights. The company is urging all of its franchisees to oppose the Employee Free Choice Act. In a memo to its 2400 franchisees, Don Thompson, President of McDonald's USA, insists they contact their senators and representatives asking them to oppose the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). The memo also announced the formation of a response team to help franchisees actively participate in the attack on EFCA.

This is a massive campaign against workers' rights to organize unions. It is not limited to McDonald's and other fast food restaurants. The EFCA is a threat to all corporations that live on cheap labor. They know that a union would limit their exploitation of low income workers and would reduce the disparity between CEO and worker salaries. For instance, James Skinner, McDonald's CEO, received \$12.3 million in compensation last year while workers at McDonald's earned \$10/hour or less.

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The Senate battle likely will get more media coverage because of the high-profile leaders associated with contrasting versions of health care reform. Senate Finance Committee chair Max Baucus (D-Montana) is pushing an insurance industry friendly approach. Sen. Ted Kennedy is pushing a more liberal bill containing a public option intended to be competitive with private, for-profit insurers. Proponents of the single-payer approach that DSA favors have been excluded from the Senate process.

DSA’s National Political Committee met this past weekend and approved the following statement:

#### On the Struggle for Universal Healthcare

DSA reaffirms its support for single-payer health insurance as the most just, cost-effective and rational method for creating a universal health-care system in the United States. In the House of Representatives, John Conyers has introduced H.R.676, the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act. This bill has 77 co-sponsors. In the Senate, Bernie Sanders has introduced S.703, the American Health Security Act of 2009, his bill has not yet attracted co-sponsors. These two pieces of legislation take different approaches to universal health insurance, but both take for-profit insurance companies out of the picture. DSA asks our locals to contact their senators and representatives, and encourage them to co-sponsor these bills if they have not already done so.

DSA notes with dismay that the current discussions and hearings in Congress relating to national health insurance have excluded single-payer health insurance from the discussion. The plans under discussion presume a large role for the existing insurance industry; possibly, in competition with a Medicare-like public option. We strongly support single payer over these other alternatives. In particular, we feel it

is vitally important to include supporters of single payer in the discussion around all possible plans, and condemn the exclusion of these voices in both President Obama’s Health Care Summit and in the hearings of the Senate Finance Committee. Particularly, in the discussions of the public options, the ideas and experience of health-care professionals committed to the single-payer approach would provide essential input.

Even taking the above into account, the current political situation provides the best opportunity for serious health-care reform in a generation. We do not accept the position that unless we get everything we want, we are willing to see that opportunity disappear. We do believe, however, that the insurance industry is powerful enough that the current political dynamic could result in a “health care reform” that is, in fact, worse than nothing at all, *because it would create a public plan that is designed to fail.*

Therefore, even while we do everything we can to ensure that single payer gets a fair hearing, we must state our minimum requirements for possible alternatives to single-payer health insurance. Our minimum position is that any plan must include a strong public-provision component, one that can compete with the private insurance options. In evaluating proposed plans, the devil is, unfortunately, in the details. Among the criteria to be considered:

- All employers and individuals must be eligible to choose the public plan, possibly during an annual open-enrollment period.
- The plan must be government run, operated by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services or by a similar agency.

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- The public plan must have the ability to negotiate drug prices.
- The public plan must be allowed to negotiate reimbursement rates, possibly pegged to Medicare rates.
- The public plan must, like Medicare, allow participants to choose their own doctors.

Short of these provisions, whatever comes out of Congress will not be real reform. Health care is a human right and must be available to all without economic barriers.

DSA recognizes that there is strong support for a single-payer plan in several states. In fact, California would have a single-payer system today if Senate Bill 840 had not been vetoed by Gov. Schwarzenegger. Therefore, DSA insists on an opt-out provision from any national plan that would allow individual states to set up their own single-player plans and to use Medicare, Medicaid and similar federal funds allocated within the state in that state plan.

In summary, DSA asks our locals and activists to engage in the following activities in support of health-care reform:

1. Urge Senators and Representatives to co-sponsor H.R.676 and S.703.
2. Support the right of single-payer proponents to have their position heard in the congressional debate.
3. Insist on the inclusion of a strong public component in any health-care reform legislation.
4. Insist on the inclusion of a state opt-out so that individual states can enact their own single-payer plans.

(Approved June 6, 2009 by DSA's National Political Committee)

National healthcare has been a key demand of the American left since before the New Deal. None of us can afford to let this moment pass without taking some action to support universal health care coverage. I urge every DSA member to take action and press like-minded friends and associates to take action. Email campaigns are important, but don't limit yourself to that. Look for an opportunity to write a letter to the editor or to urge other organizations with which you work to join in this fight. The last opportunity to pass meaningful universal health care legislation failed in 1993. We cannot let the insurance companies beat us again.

Here is the list of members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Democrats	Republicans
Max Baucus, MT Chair	Chuck Grassley, IA Ranking Member
John D. Rockefeller IV, WV	Orrin G. Hatch, UT
Kent Conrad, ND	Olympia J. Snowe, ME
Jeff Bingaman, NM	Jon Kyl, AZ
John F. Kerry, MA	Jim Bunning, KY
Blanche L. Lincoln, AR	Mike Crapo, ID
Ron Wyden, OR	Pat Roberts, KS
Charles E. Schumer, NY	John Ensign, NV
Debbie Stabenow, MI	Mike Enzi, WY
Maria Cantwell, WA	John Cornyn,, TX
Bill Nelson, FL	
Robert Menendez, NJ	
Thomas Carper, DE	

~Frank Llewellyn  
DSA National Director  
*reprinted from the DSA's National Website*

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If Skinner were paid by the hour, he would have earned almost 600 times the hourly pay of the 600,000 workers employed by the company.

The AFL-CIO, Service Employee International Union (SEIU), and UNITE-HERE are mounting a counter attack. They are trying to educate the public that EFCA is more than a simple "card check" designed to override the futile National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) elections in which workers are subject to intimidation by their employers. Fear of being fired or losing one's job due to a plant closure make such elections nearly impossible to win. EFCA also creates a mechanism for binding arbitration of contested issues in a first contract for newly organized unions. It also contains strong sanctions against unfair labor practices committed during an organizing campaign.

Contrary to the propaganda disseminated by employer organizations, ECFA does not violate workers' freedom of choice. Workers in a proposed bargaining unit may still demand a secret ballot NLRB election if 30% of the workers in the unit sign cards expressing their preference to be represented by a union. However, if over 50% of the workers in a proposed bargaining unit sign such cards, they may opt to forego the NLRB election and receive immediate recognition of their union.

Detroit DSA calls on our members to contact their senators and members of Congress to express their support for EFCA. Furthermore, we will shortly be posting an electronic petition to the executives at McDonald's demanding that they refrain from interfering in their workers choice of representation. This petition will soon be available through links from the DSA website ([www.dsausa.org](http://www.dsausa.org)).

~Maurice Geary

## MSU YDS Update

### Recent Activities

#### Really Really Free Market

In May the East Lansing community had a successful Really Really Free Market event, where free clothing, books, music, fix-it skills, games, and art were shared. YDS made available information packets next to a small, makeshift recycling station. Renegotiate NAFTA petitions were also circulated throughout the daylong affair. The event was publicized by Facebook and word of mouth and turned out about 200 enthusiastic community members.

#### Peace Over Prejudice Art Contest

MSU YDS ally organization, Peace Over Prejudice, began an art contest in May, to which several YDS members submitted "happy proletarian art" as member Peter Klein jokingly put it. The art contest was open to MSU, U of M and Lansing Community College students. Submissions were to fit this year's theme, Creative Peace. The pieces are now being judged, the winners and those eligible for a "people's choice" vote will be announced soon. Check the Peace Over Prejudice website and Facebook, and vote for your favorites!

#### Desmond Tutu Addresses MSU Commencement

South African Anti-Apartheid activist, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and Bishop, Desmond Tutu was given an honorary degree from MSU and addressed graduating students at the Breslin Center in May. Member Nicole laquinto was privileged to meet Bishop Tutu in a small group before his speech. She found his words of wisdom to be uplifting and inspiring. "Meet Desmond Tutu was like meeting the father I

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never had. He was so very kind and nurturing to everyone in the room. You could feel his love for humanity, and his passion for social justice.” Iaquinto was nominated to attend and was chosen through the Office of International Studies. Not surprisingly, other YDS members were also nominated and selected to attend the intimate affair.

#### YDS Assists DSA at Michigan Policy Summit

YDS Co-Coordinator Allison Voglesong went to Cobo Hall to assist the Detroit DSA petition to Renegotiate NAFTA at the 2009 Michigan Policy Summit. Further expanding her networking skills, Allison spoke with other groups tabling at the Summit and encountered many fellow MSU students and recent alumni. “There is a huge contingency of politically articulate students whose advocacy efforts are allied with YDS’s own,” says Voglesong. Several groups were interested in speaking with YDS and DSA members for future events, including the Coalition of Labor Union Women, The Ecology Center, Get Michigan Moving, and organizers for the US Social Forum, which will be held in Detroit, June 2010.

#### Current and Upcoming Activities

Summer Retreat in Catskills, July 30 - August 2

YDS members are working out the details regarding the upcoming National YDS Summer Retreat, July 30 - August 2 in the beautiful upstate city of Wurtsboro, NY. Registration costs \$200 until July 15. Scholarships to waive fees are due July 8. Please see the national YDS website for more details. MSU YDS is looking for interested student representatives to ensure a strong Michigan presence at the national level.

#### MSU YDS Retreat in the Works

Advisor Austin Jackson, recently back from beautiful Jamaica, is working with the Residential College of Arts and Humanities for the 09-10 “21st Century Chautauqua” program, continued from the past year. MSU YDS is incubating plans for a retreat of our own in order to thoroughly prepare to contribute to the upcoming Chautauqua program, as well as continuing the Renegotiate NAFTA campaign, ramping up our online presence, engaging in community education, fundraising for honorariums, and the like.

Overall, YDS has a strong campus presence this summer, as many of our members have stayed in the East Lansing area to continue education, work, and enjoy the beautiful scenery. Don’t forget to make it out to the Detroit DSA general membership meeting on July 11th!

~Allison Voglesong  
MSU YDS Co-Coordinator

**Agenda for July 11th DSA General Membership Meeting**

1. Treasury Report
2. Report on Jobs with Justice (JWJ)
3. Report on Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network (MichUHCAN)
4. Report on Michigan Alliance to Strengthen Social Security and Medicare (MASSM)
5. Report on Detroit Area Peace with Justice Network (DAPJN)
6. Report on Education Committee—next DSA Forum
7. Report on Meeting with Representative Gary Peters
8. Speaker: Representative from MOSES on ‘Mass Transit in Southeastern Michigan’