



"I'M ASKING YOU TO BELIEVE. Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington ... I'm asking you to believe in yours."

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OBAMA NEWS & SPEECHES

Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: Health Care Town Hall

Bristol, VA | June 05, 2008

A fact sheet on Senator Obama's plan to contain skyrocketing health care costs is available here.

Before Mark leaves the stage, let me just say what a privilege it is to have the support of such a remarkable leader. Let me also say that Mark's wife, Lisa Collis, has been a terrific supporter for several months.

As an entrepreneur, a Governor, and a leader in the Democratic Party – Mark has provided extraordinary leadership that has achieved extraordinary results. He knows that the challenges we face are not about left versus right or Democrat versus Republican – they are about the past versus the future. And Mark Warner has followed a simple formula to deliver real change - he brings people together around a common purpose, and common sense solutions.

As Governor, he put partisanship aside, turned a budget deficit into a surplus, expanded health care for children, and made the largest investment in K-12 education in Virginia history. He knows that folks here in southwest Virginia should be able to live their dreams without leaving their hometown, and that America needs an energy policy that grows our economy, secures our country, and saves our planet. I look forward to campaigning with him this fall.

And as President of the United States, I look forward to working with Mark Warner to bring fundamental change to Washington when he joins Jim Webb as the next great Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

I'd like to say a few words today about one of the most important challenges we face in this country and one of the biggest issues in this election – our health care crisis. You know, I've been traveling across America on this campaign for 16 months now, and everywhere I've gone, I've heard heartbreaking stories about our health care system.

There's the young woman I met who works the night shift after a full day of college and still can't afford medicine for a sister who's ill; or the man I met who almost lost his home because he has three children with cystic fibrosis and couldn't pay their health care bills; who still doesn't have health insurance for himself or his wife and lives in fear that a single illness could cost them everything.

This election is about them. It's about you. It's about every one of the 47 million Americans in Virginia, in Tennessee and across this country, who are going without the health care they need and the millions more who are struggling to pay rising costs.

But let's be honest – we've been talking about this for a long time. Year after year, election after election, candidates make promises about fixing health care and cutting costs. And then they go back to Washington, and nothing changes – because the big drug and insurance companies write another check or because lobbyists use their clout to block reform. And when the next election rolls around, even more Americans are uninsured, and even more families are struggling to pay their medical bills.

Well, we're here today because we know that if we're going to make real progress, this time must be different. Throughout my career, in Illinois and the United States senate, I've worked to reduce the power of the special interests by leading the fight for ethics reform. I've sent a strong signal in this campaign by refusing the contributions of registered federal lobbyists and PACs. And today, I'm announcing that going forward, the Democratic National Committee will uphold the same standard and won't take another dime

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DELEGATE COUNTDOWN

WHERE WE ARE

Table with 3 columns: Category, OBAMA, CLINTON. Rows: Contests (34, 19), Total Delegates (2187.5, 1927)

WHAT WE NEED

Visual comparison of pledged vs total delegates for Obama and Clinton.

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from Washington lobbyists or special interest PACs. They do not fund my campaign. They will not fund our party. And they will not drown out the voices of the American people when I'm President of the United States.

It's time to finally challenge the special interests and provide universal health care for all. That's why I'm running for President of the United States – because I believe that health care should be guaranteed for every American who wants it and affordable for every American who needs it.

And this is an area where John McCain and I have a fundamental disagreement. Now, I respect John McCain, and I honor his service to this country. My differences with him are not personal; they're about the policies he's proposed on this campaign – policies that are no different than the ones that have failed us for the last eight years.

And that starts with health care. We know that since George Bush took office, premiums have gone up four times faster than wages, and Virginia families are now paying over 35% more for health care. Seven million more Americans are uninsured, including nearly 200,000 here in Virginia. Yet John McCain actually wants to double down on the failed policies that have done so little to help ordinary Americans.

Like George Bush, Senator McCain has a plan that only takes care of the healthy and the wealthy. Instead of offering a comprehensive plan to cover all Americans and control rising costs, he's offering a tax cut that doesn't even amount to half of the cost of an average family health care plan, and won't make health care affordable for the hardworking Americans who need help most.

But it's not just that his plan won't help reduce costs; it could actually drive costs up. Senator McCain's plan would weaken the employer-based system that most Americans count on for health care. It's a plan that could subject your coverage to the whims of the market, generate up to \$20 billion in new administrative costs, and actually put health care costs out of reach for even more older workers, even more sick Americans, and even more families. Senator McCain's campaign has even acknowledged that his plan could have the effect of raising taxes on some workers.

Well, I don't think the American people can afford another four years of a health care plan that does more to help the big drug and insurance companies than it does to lower costs for ordinary Americans. We need to make health care affordable for every single American, and that's what I'll do as President.

In an Obama administration, we'll lower premiums by up to \$2,500 for a typical family per year. And we'll do it by investing in disease prevention, not just disease management; by investing in a paperless health care system to reduce administrative costs; and by covering every single American and making sure that they can take their health care with them if they lose their job. We'll also reduce costs for business and their workers by picking up the tab for some of the most expensive illnesses. And we won't do all this twenty years from now, or ten years from now. We'll do it by the end of my first term as President of the United States.

So the American people will have a clear choice on health care in the fall. We can either extend the Bush policies that we know don't work; or at this moment, in this election, we can come together and say enough is enough, we're going to finally solve this problem once and for all.

I don't want to wake up many years from now and see that even more Americans are uninsured and even more seniors can't afford prescription drugs and even more families are being driven to financial ruin trying to pay their bills because we failed to take on the drug and insurance companies and provide universal health care. That's not the future I want for my children. That's not the future I want for your children. That's not the future I want for this country.

I want to wake up and know that every single American has health care when they need it, that every senior has prescription drugs they can afford, and that no parents are going to bed at night worrying about how they'll afford medicine for a sick child. That's the future we can build together. That's the choice you'll have this fall. And that's why I'm running for President of the United States of America.



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