

# Protest Tool Kit:

## Practical Advice in the Fight for Single-Payer Health Care



Created by the Chicago Single-Payer Action Network  
**CSPAN**

[www.chispan.org](http://www.chispan.org)

# ChiSPAN

Chicago Single-Payer Action Network

Created by CSPAN  
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**Protest Tool Kit:**  
**Practical Advice in the Fight for**  
**Single-Payer Health Care**

CSPAN is a Chicago-based grassroots group fighting to win guaranteed health care for all. We believe private insurance is a barrier to health care and should be eliminated. We are building the movement for a single-payer health care system through education and action.

We created this tool kit to assist other single-payer groups in organizing protests of insurance companies. The photographs in this manual were all taken during our protests in Chicago. We hope you will find this tool kit helpful in organizing your own protests.

Please contact us if you have any questions. Also, please let us know of your own experiences. We would love to hear from you.

Chicago Single-Payer Action Network (CSPAN)

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## Before the Protest

CSPAN recommends allowing at least 6 weeks to plan your protest.

### Outreach

Organize an outreach committee. The outreach committee identifies and contacts allies who are within the single-payer movement already. For example, CSPAN met and developed a plan to confirm that Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) and the National Nurses Organizing Committee (NNOC) were contacted, even though one of our members is a member of PNHP. We also asked that each of these organizations help build the picket amongst its membership (we developed an e-mail announcement and flyer to distribute).

Determine additional groups to contact who are new or not as active in the movement. This can include trade unions for health and non-health care workers, as well as student groups, community groups, churches, etc. Health care is one of the top three issues in the upcoming 2008 elections, precisely because it affects a majority of people in the U.S.

Getting out representatives from each group, especially if they have not been very involved in past actions is a fantastic step forward for our movement in two ways. First, it helps to build participants confidence knowing they are part of a group of people who feel similarly about fighting for better health care, and second it helps your group network for the future, meeting new/more seasoned activists alike. For each participant, get a name, telephone number and email address in order to stay in touch for future actions and events. Plan to have representatives from as many groups as possible speak briefly at the protest in order to engage people and also to show the breadth of representation.

### Flyer

Create a **flyer** to advertise your protest. Post your flyer where people will see it. See page 6 for an **example** of a CSPAN flyer.

Use your flyer to **leaflet** health care-related events such as meetings, speakers or movies in order to draw in new people who are not happy with health insurance companies denying people coverage, but may not fully understanding single-payer as an option or have questions about its viability. Also, going to an anti-war or immigrant rights demonstration is a good idea, if you have such an opportunity, in order to be able to argue the connections between these issues and the fight for single-payer.

## **Handout**

Create a handout for use during your protest. The handout should have information about single-payer health care and information to help people get involved. See pages 11 and 12 for an **example** of a two-sided CSPAN handout.

## **Signs and Banners**

Build signs and banners for your protest. See the box on page 15 for instructions on building signs and banners. Photos throughout this manual show examples. **Get together to decorate your signs and have a good time!**

## **Color Scheme**

Your group might want to decide on a color scheme for your protest to be more eye-catching. CSPAN has worn florescent vests at our protests. You can see CSPAN members wearing vests in the photos throughout this manual.

## **Contacting the Media: The Press Release**

A good press release is part of the publicity for any event. It should be brief, to the point and spell checked. Include the reason for the demonstration, all the groups endorsing it, date, time, place, and contact person's phone number. Fax it to media outlets. A **sample press release** follows on page 5.

Select a press person just in case the media does show up. Large media outlets might not cover our protests because they tend to be on the smaller side, but alternative media might cover it. In any case, **DO NOT GET DISCOURAGED**. Eventually media will have to cover our protests, but we are not doing these types of events solely for the media, we are doing it to build our side of the fight and to show our opposition to the health insurance industry.

Be prepared in advance to give press coherent press packets with contact names of people prepared to speak on the topic right away. Develop press relationships with people you can rely on to report on your event and the single-payer movement with a positive perspective.

## **Legal Right to Protest**

Contact the National Lawyers Guild to have legal observers at a protest of insurance companies:

**<http://www.nlg.org>**

Before your protest, learn more about your rights. See the following document created by the National Lawyers Guild:

**<http://www.nlg-la.org/righttoprotest.htm>**

Contact: Alison McKenna  
Tel: 312-555-1234  
Email: [chisinglepayer@gmail.com](mailto:chisinglepayer@gmail.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## LOCAL SINGLE-PAYER ADVOCAY GROUP ORGANIZES PROTEST OF BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD

Event aims to increase public awareness about the Chicago-based effort to reform health care.

CHICAGO, IL—The Chicago Single-Payer Action Network (CSPAN) is planning a protest of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois. The protest, which is scheduled for Wednesday, August 29 from 4 to 6 PM, will take place in front of Blue Cross Blue Shield's corporate headquarters at 300 E. Randolph. The group hopes that the event will call attention to the burgeoning effort in Chicago to enact a single payer health care system, as proposed in Illinois House Bill 311 and U.S. House Resolution 676.

CSPAN is a grassroots organization dedicated to educating people about the benefits of the single payer health care system model. Recently created, its members share the belief that the best way to correct the current failing system is to dismantle the private insurance companies, replacing them with a publicly run health services board.

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with a representative, please call Alison McKenna at 312-555-1234 or e-mail Alison at [chisinglepayer@gmail.com](mailto:chisinglepayer@gmail.com)

# PICKET BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF ILLINOIS

Stop the **HEALTH CARE HORROR STORIES!**  
 Get Rid of the Insurance Companies!  
 We Want Single-Payer Now!

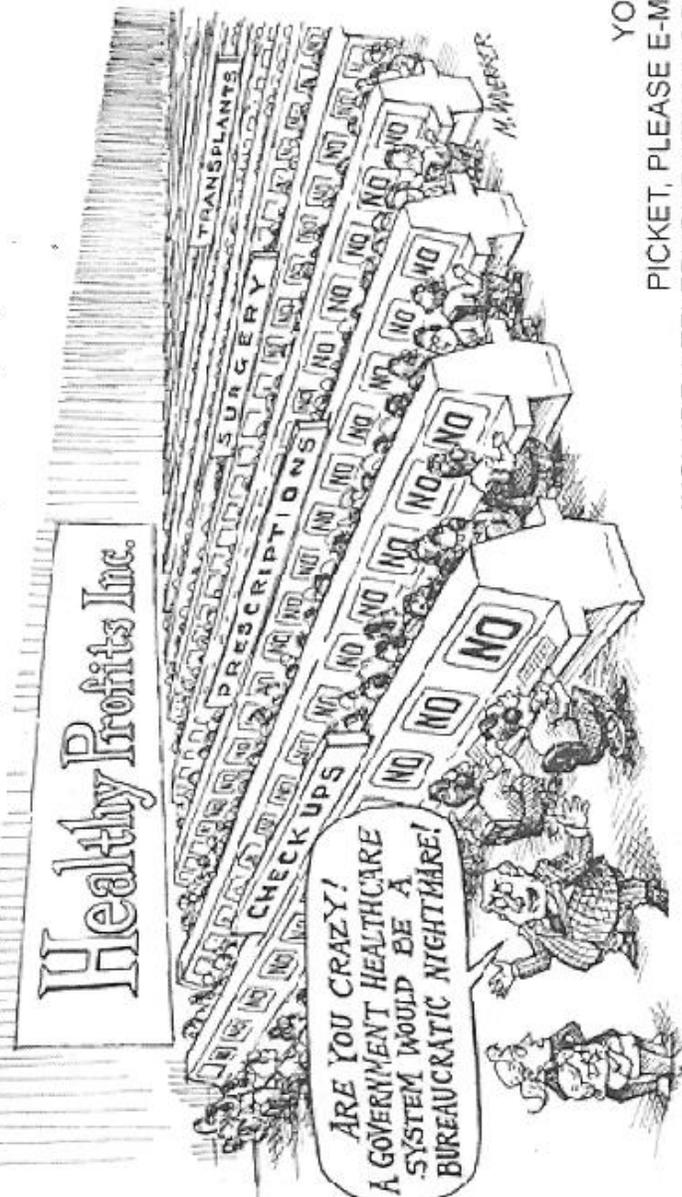
Wednesday, August 29  
 4-6 p.m.  
 At 300 E. Randolph

In the U.S., we spend over \$2 trillion for health care, yet millions are still not covered or receiving the care they need. The health care coverage in the United States is ranked #37 in the world by the World Health Organization and yet we spend almost twice as much as any other country, enough to cover everyone with excellent comprehensive benefits. Fifty million Americans are uninsured, millions are denied insurance because of pre-existing conditions and the high cost of premiums, and million more are under-insured.

Over and over again, we see uninsured people denied health care because corporation like Blue Cross Blue Shield (BSBC) are more interested in making profit than providing medical care.

Join us to tell BSBC they cannot continue to deny their patient's needed treatment so they can boast their bottom line -- higher profits!

Michael Moore was right when he said in his documentary SICKO that the private insurance industry has to be evicted from health care and a single-payer system, where everyone is covered, is the only way out of the crisis in health care.



Sponsored by:  
 Chicago Single-Payer Activist Network (CSPAN)  
 For more information, please  
 email [chingsinglepayer@gmail.com](mailto:chingsinglepayer@gmail.com)

Invited speakers include patients with health care horror stories, members of Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP)\*, National Nurses Organizing Committee (NNOC)\*, the Chicago Single-Payer Activist Network (CSPAN), Access Living\*, and more with list in formation...

\*organizations for identification purposes only

IF YOU HAVE A HEALTH CARE HORROR STORY  
 YOU WOULD BE WILLING TO TALK ABOUT AT THE

PICKET, PLEASE E-MAIL IT TO [CHINGSINGLEPAYER@GMAIL.COM](mailto:CHINGSINGLEPAYER@GMAIL.COM) AND  
 INCLUDE A TELEPHONE #/EMAIL SO CSPAN CAN CONTACT YOU ABOUT SPEAKING.

# During the Protest

## Getting Started

You will find the following items useful at your protest: **Bullhorn or microphone sound system, camera, sign-up sheets or petition, flyers, notepad, multiple pens, tape, signs and banners.**

Gather people up. If you have access to a bullhorn (you can buy one of these at Radio Shack for about \$100-\$120) or if you have a microphone sound system, speak into it to get everyone's attention and ask them to gather around you. Don't forget to welcome everyone to the picket and mention the main sponsor (in our case it was the Chicago Single-Payer Action Network or CSPAN). Also, say a little something about why we are all there.

## Police

Sometimes the police or security will approach you about your plan for the protest. It is best to introduce yourself, clearly communicate your plan in the simplest of terms and reassure them you will not do anything out-of-the-bounds of the law.

## The Protest

Encourage people to begin to protest or picket, probably best in a circle, and make sure someone is leading **chants** (see page 9 for chants). As more people gather, expand the size of the picket to include them and make sure those who want signs have them made available to them. March around for a certain amount of time to allow for the picket to become visible to passersby and to attract more people to participate if they want to.

After marching for a while, it would be good to gather people back up and open up the bullhorn or microphone for each group or for individuals (such as health care workers or students) to say a few words about why they are there, their experiences, why we need to protest insurance companies, how we can build a bigger, broader movement, etc. Solicit others in your group to find out if they know of anyone who in the crowd who may want to speak so everyone is given a chance to be represented. Give **handouts** to passersby.

Talk informally to the people you don't know who have come to the protest. Trying to get new people involved in your group is one of the key goals of doing such a protest. Ask people to sign a **sign-up sheet** to get involved.

## End on a Positive Note

Wrap up the protest by thanking everyone for participating. End with a chant to leave it on a good, positive note. Announce the next meeting or event of your single-payer group stating the time, date and place and encourage those who are interested to come and talk with you or anyone from your group (have a few people raise their hands to identify themselves as members). Also, it is very important to thank your allies one-on-one and ask them what they thought of the event, how they would improve the next one, etc.



Representative Mary Flowers (IL) at a CSPAN protest

## Chants and Handouts

See the box on page 9 for some of the **chants** CSPAN has used for insurance company protests. See pages 11 and 12 for a sample of a two-sided **handout** CSPAN used at a protest.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY PROTEST CHANTS**

***Patients,  
not profits!  
Profits,  
get off it!***

***Hey hey!  
Ho ho!  
Health insurance companies  
have got to go!***

***Health insurance  
is a lie!  
They don't care  
if people die!***

***Everybody in!  
Nobody out!***

***Insurers deny!  
People die!***

***Get sick,  
go broke!  
Unacceptable!***

***Health care! Not warfare!***

***Keep your doctor!  
Lose the red tape!***

***Fund the wounded, not the war!***

***Blue Cross / Blue Shield,  
what do you say?  
How many claims denied today?***

***What do we want?  
Health care!  
When do we want it?  
Now!***

***Health care is a right!  
Health care is a right, hey!***



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Prescription for our Sick “Health Care” System

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**R<sub>x</sub>      Single-Payer National Health Insurance**

**U.S. National Health Insurance Act (HR676) and (HB311) in IL.**

The Problem: A Failed Private Insurance System  
that Puts Profits Ahead of Patients

The United States has the highest health spending in the world, yet 45 million Americans have no health insurance and millions more are under-insured and unable to access care. Illness and medical bills contribute to half of all U.S. bankruptcies. Prescription drug costs are the highest in the world. Even though other industrialized democracies spend less on health care, their citizens are guaranteed coverage for life, they live longer, and have better access to care.

**The Solution: Non-Profit National Health Insurance**

Americans spend more money for less coverage and care because we are the only industrialized country that allows for-profit insurance companies to be middlemen in our health system. In their drive to enroll healthy (and profitable) patients and screen out the sick, private insurers waste vast sums on billing, marketing, underwriting, utilization review and other activities that enhance profits but divert resources from care and hassle patients and physicians. The paperwork they inflict on doctors and hospitals wastes hundreds of billions more each year.

Replacing private insurance companies with a single-payer public program - “Medicare for All” - would save about \$350 billion per year, enough money to provide guaranteed comprehensive health benefits for all. (New England Journal of Medicine, 2003)

Nearly one-third of U.S. health spending goes to administrative costs and profits for insurance companies instead of care - \$2,300 per person.

U.S. spends twice as much on health care than any industrialized nation, yet we rank 37<sup>th</sup> in quality of care.

Single-payer health care could save about \$350 billion (\$1,150 per person by simplifying health administration).

**Beware of Phony Universal Coverage:** Many political candidates say they support “universal health care” but usually this just means making more Americans insurance company customers. (i.e. Illinois Governor Blagojevich Plan SB 5). Real universal coverage means evicting insurance companies and establishing a single-payer national health program instead.

## How Would “Medicare for All” Work?

- **Universal & Guaranteed:** Everyone is covered for life, regardless of health or employment.
- **Comprehensive:** Coverage for all medically necessary care, prescriptions, and home care.
- **Free choice of doctor and hospital.**
- **Savings of \$350 billion on bureaucracy** would mean added coverage without added cost.
- **Helps job growth and the U.S. economy** by taking the burden of health costs off of business.

### How Would a “Medicare for All” Health System Work?

Every resident would receive a National Health Insurance Card. This card could be presented to any doctor or hospital for a full range of benefits. Patients would pay nothing out of pocket and they would receive no medical bills. Doctors and hospitals would be paid out of a single national health fund instead of a wasteful patchwork of insurance companies. The paperwork savings would be enough to provide coverage for all without spending any more.

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## Get Active Locally to Win Universal Health Insurance for All

### Join Chicago Single Payer Action Network (CSPAN)

- **CSPAN’s next meeting is on Wednesday October 10th** at Access Living (115 W. Chicago Avenue) at 6:30pm. All are welcome!
- **E-mail** [chisinglepayer@gmail.com](mailto:chisinglepayer@gmail.com) or **call** 312-555-5555 or 312-555-1234 to see what you can do to get involved.
- **Join the petition: Campaign around bills HB311 and HR676** and let your representatives know that you support single-payer health insurance.
- **Pass a resolution** in your community, church, labor, professional or civic group endorsing HB 311 and HR676.
- **We are planning** town hall meetings, rallies and speak-outs. We are open to hearing your ideas about how we can win Single-Payer!

Get more information on Single Payer Health Insurance at the following sites:  
[www.chispan.org](http://www.chispan.org), [www.sickocure.org](http://www.sickocure.org), [www.pnhp.org](http://www.pnhp.org), [www.healthcare-now.org](http://www.healthcare-now.org)

# After the Protest

## Report on your Success

After your protest, send out a report so others will know what you did. The following is a CSPAN report to Michael Moore's website via Donna Smith (American SiCKO and American Patients for Universal Healthcare, APUHC) and illustrates how the picket felt the day of:

CHICAGO -- On Wednesday, August 29, Chicago Single-Payer Action Network's first action went off without a hitch in front of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois in Chicago.

"We estimate between 40 to 50 people attended. It was energetic, loud and serious," reports Elizabeth Lalasz of CSPAN. She said the group formed a circle in front of the building and chanted, "Hey Blue Cross, what do you say, how many claims did you deny today?" and "People over profits, single-payer now."

Several BCBS executives came out, as well as security, to make sure BCBS employees didn't talk to any of the protesters. In fact, security made the employees go out the side entrance in order to avoid the CSPAN group. So, the group moved the picket over to where the employees were coming out, and a decent number of BCBS employees took CSPAN flyers and Lalasz said several of them mouthed, "I agree with you." Later, CSPAN got word that BCBS employees received an email directing them to not talk to the protesters.

Some protesters showed up because of their own horrible experiences with the U.S. health care system. Amanda Jones, a 25-year-old from Cary, IL, was diagnosed with a rare neurological disorder, cavernous angioma, and has close to \$300,000 in medical bills. Blue Cross, among others, has denied her coverage, because they say she has a pre-existing condition. "It's really horrible. We have been doing some fundraising to help her," Lalasz said.

There were health care workers involved in the protest, including doctors, nurses, and social workers. Nursing and medical students also came to the event from University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC), Truman and Malcolm X Chicago City Colleges, and Northwestern University.

There were a good number of groups represented at the protest as well: Physicians for National Health Plan (PHNP), National Nurses Organizing Committee (NNOC), Health-Care Now!, Metropolitan Seniors in Action, Older Women's League, Health Care for All Illinois, American Medical Student Association (AMSA), International Socialist Organization (ISO), Progressive Democrats of America (PDA), Access Living, Green Party, and the Kucinich Campaign.

Aside from last week's protest, CSPAN will do an action in Chicago in

conjunction with the action American Patients for Universal Health Care is taking on Sept. 28 in Washington, D.C. CSPAN will be at the State of Illinois building, highlighting Illinois patients from 4 to 6 p.m. on Friday, September 28. The event will feature State Representative Mary Flowers, who is the main sponsor of the single-payer bill in Illinois.

Here is the link to the report:

<http://www.michaelmoore.com/sicko/blog/2007/09/standing-up-to-blue-cross.html>

### **Review your Protest**

Get together with your group and talk about what worked and what might work better next time. Record new contacts and email addresses collected at your protest and follow up as necessary.



## **The Power of Protest**

Protests, demonstrations and marches are critical to building a movement for single-payer. Our movement has to be visible to the public and we must remain in the face of those who oppose single-payer (the health care corporations and politicians they buy). A protest is a statement that we are serious and willing to fight for what we believe - that health care is a human right. It also builds the confidence of the members of our organizations. There is no substitute for being with a group of like-minded people, chanting, picketing, and listening to speakers, together in front of an insurance or drug company building. We also influence the people who work for these corporations. At the demonstration in Chicago in front of Blue Cross / Blue Shield, security stopped workers from leaving all exits of the building where we had CSPAN members stationed with petitions and leaflets. The Blue Cross / Blue Shield employees were forced to use a side door, but we got to them despite that trick.

Most demonstrations will be small to medium in size, but **DON'T GET DISCOURAGED. OUR MOVEMENT IS GROWING!**

## ***How to Construct Banners and Picket Signs***

### **Banners with Good Visibility (see photos on cover, bottom of page 2, and page 8):**

Create 3' x 8' vinyl banners (reusable):

Support banner on 2-8' 1x2's with 8' 1x2 cross bar.

Assemble with wood screws, or machine bolts, lock washers and nuts.

Attach banner to supports with tie-wraps.

Finally, sand and tape 1x2's. Tape will help protect hands from sharp edges.

### **Picket Signs (see photos at top of page 2 and on page 10):**

#### **Simple:**

Use wood slats or lath ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick by  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " or 2" wide by 4' or 5' long).

Use cheap masking or packing tape on the lower part to protect hands.

Staple two pieces of poster board (15" x 24") to each side of wood slat using  $\frac{3}{4}$ " square pieces of clear plastic folder under staples to prevent staples from pulling through poster board. Staple the edges of poster board together to prevent flapping.

It is best to create entire assembly prior to event. Signs are hard to transport in bulk. Signs might not be reusable unless care is taken.

#### **Not Simple:**

5' 1x2 handles (10' 1x2, cut in half)

Cut 5' length into 2 pieces:

One piece: Height of poster board plus 3"

Other piece: remainder of 5'

Sand all edges of handle and then tape to protect hands.

Make socket of aluminum channel to join these two 1x2 pieces.

Attach 2 pieces of thin aluminum channel (4" long) to the edges of the handle 1x2, this will form a socket that the bottom of the poster board 1x2 will fit into.

Temporarily join the two pieces of the assembly using tie-wraps through holes drilled in the two pieces of 1x2.

Easy on-site assembly and disassembly and easy transportation:

Tie poster board parts of sign together using string or wire through tie-wrap hole in 1x2. Tie handle portions of picket signs together in a bundle.