

Rep. Daniel Kagan, Mad As Hell Doctors, September 14, 2009, State Capitol Steps, Denver, Colorado, noon rally.

Thank you, Dr. Aguilar, for that very generous introduction, and thanks also to the wonderful doctors, who care so much about their patients that they have given of their time and their treasure to travel here today and stand with us in support of creating and implementing, in this wealthy nation, a system which provides decent health care for all.

Friends, the Battle of Washington is on, and it is not going exactly as we might ideally have liked. A single-payer system, which our president only recently described as a good way forward, is no longer being considered in Washington, D.C. A broadly available robust public option, big enough and powerful enough to keep the insurance companies in line, has been declared, just last week, to be merely an option for inclusion in the final bill, dispensable, not essential to the federal plan. The prospect of Republican support for meaningful health care reform, which only months ago seemed dependable, has been reduced, now, to little more than a naïve hope.

But these bumps in the road, these stumbles, are not going to make us give up or weaken our resolve to see the day come, not too far in the future, when dependable health care is there for all who need it, rich and poor, young and old, for the healthy, to keep them healthy, and for the sick, to alleviate their pain and provide relief from their suffering.

That day will come. But not until opponents of real health care reform are either convinced, or overwhelmed. Some are open to reason, but in talking to many of them, I find they have been overcome with fear, fear of two things, the first of which is rationing.

To them, we say, join us, for we despise rationing too. We despise a rationing system that says that if you lose your job, your ration plunges to zero; a system that says if you are insured, and get sick, when renewal day comes along, your ration plunges to zero; a system that says if you have long-term needs, which over time will prove expensive, your ration is your lifetime cap of a million dollars, after which your ration plunges to zero; a system which says that if you have spent a lifetime building a nest-egg, your ration is that nest-egg itself, and when we have driven you into poverty and destitution, then your ration plunges to zero; a system that says if you made a mistake on your insurance application form, omitted some detail, your insurer will find it and your ration plunges to zero.

So we say to opponents of real reform that if you oppose rationing, so do we, if you want to end arbitrary, cruel, profit-motivated rationing, so do we. Join us in demanding real health care reform.

The second fear I've seen in opponents, is the fear that reform cannot be done through government, that if government is involved, it cannot be constructive, but must wreak havoc and destroy the system it is trying to improve.

But this is wrong, completely out of step with history. Our current system of health care is obscene, but it is not the first obscenity in American history that fair-minded people have sought to obliterate.

Slavery was obscene, and stoutly defended by those who profited from it. When abolitionists gathered and determined that the evil institution should be disbanded, that agricultural work should be reformed, those great visionary men and women didn't go it alone – they used their government to help

them force the reform through. And when Americans decided that they would do other seemingly impossible feats, put a man on the moon, or drive a freeway through the Rocky Mountains west from Denver, or put an end to the indignities inflicted daily upon American blacks, those great strides of progress were accomplished by strong people like you, using their government as their tool, using their conscience as their power.

And so it will be with health care. We will not rest until it is provided to all, until reform is done, just as the abolitionists did not rest, and the suffragettes did not rest, and the civil rights movement did not rest. Like them, using our government as our weapon, and our conscience as our guide, we will prevail.