

Speech by Senator Joyce Foster, presented at Mad As Hell Doctors, noon rally, State Capitol Steps, Denver Colorado, September 14, 2009

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Having a family medical emergency this summer, and spending a large amount of time at doctors' offices and waiting rooms, made me even more aware and sympathetic for all the people who are so limited with the type of health insurance they have and those that don't have any insurance. Many Coloradans are struggling with no family support; being unemployed or having a job that they will not be able to return to since it's part-time or seasonal; and incredible stress wondering how they are going to pay medical bills.

My summer vacation reinforced my belief that our health care system needs a real "scrape off". We have no time to remodel because as a state and country we are way beyond that.

I've always been single-payer advocate and I still am. It's too bad our leadership didn't have the courage to include single-payer advocates at the table in Washington to at least be part of the health care reform discussion. So, we now have the "public option" of a government-run system, which has become misunderstood and very emotional.

I'm in favor of the public option because every American will have the CHOICE to take it or not. If a family member or friend has no insurance, this will finally give them a viable option. Despite the fear-mongers, I trust this program would work and I would enroll myself. I start with the premise that health care is a right. We have a right to public education. Some like it; others choose to send their children to a private or religious school. We all pay for public education through our taxes regardless if we use it or whether we even have children. Similarly, Americans will still have the choice to participate in the public option or purchase private health insurance.

Some of you agree with me and others don't. That's OK. This is a Democracy. You can and should voice your opinion. Meantime, I will be working very hard to convince our Congressional delegation to support a public option.

We must have the courage to take leadership on this issue and not shrink from pressure from special-interest groups that will do just about anything to have any efforts at reform fail. Friends, this is it. We desperately need to pass this plan this year. I urge you to call all of your Congressional delegation and talk to people in their offices: write, email, carrier pigeon, telegram, or go to rallies.

I'm grateful that we had the resources for my husband's illness. My goal during this next year is to make sure that all Coloradans have those life saving resources. You have my word that I will be relentless on this issue.