

# Local Health Care Reform Supporters Rally in Harrisburg to Urge Rep. Holden to Vote Yes

*Speakers emphasize the High Cost of Failure, Rising Costs of Insurance and Increasing Numbers of People who are Uninsured or Underinsured*

*Harrisburg, Pennsylvania* - About 45 local supporters of health care reform rallied across from the Federal Building in downtown Harrisburg Wednesday at lunchtime, calling on Congressman Tim Holden to vote in favor of the reform bill about to come up for a vote in the House of Representatives.



**Photo:** Dr. Valerie Arkoosh, President, National Physicians' Alliance, speaking to health care rally at the Federal Building Wednesday

Speakers addressed the need for health care reform from the moral perspective as well as the economic impact of doing nothing. Andy Evenson, a Lutheran pastor from Lebanon, spoke about “the paralysis of fear that is gripping our nation” – “fear that I can’t afford a doctor, fear of the next illness, fear of the next deductible, fear of losing my job and therefore my health care.” He urged listeners to remember that “The greatness of our health care system, in the eyes of faith, is the level of care provided to the least of these among us – those who have been denied, delayed or left for dead.”

Dwight Edwards of Harrisburg came to the rally with his own personal story of denial. Just recently, he said, he was hospitalized with kidney disease, which began to improve with treatment. His doctor said he needed to stay in the hospital longer, but he was discharged when the insurance company said that he'd been in the hospital long enough.

Kathy Jellison, President of SEIU Local 668 in Harrisburg, summed up the moral argument by saying, “It ain’t right!” a chant that the crowd took up spontaneously.

Other chants, “Health Care Now” and “Status quo, gotta go!” were occasionally drowned out by honking cars and trucks, with drivers giving demonstrators the thumbs up sign.

Valerie Arkoosh, President of the National Physicians Alliance, told the crowd that passage of the bill would bring several immediate benefits: Pennsylvania citizens would have access to the same type of health insurance plans as Members of Congress have; small businesses would receive tax credits to purchase quality, affordable insurance for their employees; physicians would be able to spend less time on paperwork and more time on patient care.

Other provisions in the legislation, Dr. Arkoosh said, would mean that seniors would no longer face the ‘donut hole’ in Medicare Part D; and insurance companies will no longer be able to drop people when they get sick or reach an arbitrary lifetime cap on benefits.



Pennsylvania Health Access Network, the main organizer of the event, publicized a new report by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation showing that the status quo is unsustainable, with insurance companies hiking premium rates by as much as 100% and reducing benefits at the same time, pushing more people off insurance and adding to the burden of hospitals and taxpayers. The cost of doing nothing is too high for the American people and the economy, according to the report, and that cost is only going to go higher if Congress does not act.

Alison Hirsch, PHAN organizer for Central Pennsylvania, spoke about insurance companies using consumers' premium dollars to pay for “unlimited advertising, lobbying, and sky-high CEO salaries.”

Local supporters have traveled to Washington, D.C., twice in the past few weeks, Hirsch said, in to carry their message directly to Congress. Now they are bringing the message home to Congressman Tim Holden’s district, to urge him to vote yes on health care reform, for the sake of his constituents and all Pennsylvanians.