

herndon Alliance

Healing America's Healthcare

Hello,

For about a year, Herndon Alliance has been emailing you 'Messages of the Week.' We first decided to do this because we thought it would help health reform advocates:

Stay on message,
Stay above the rants and the prickly weeds,
Push beyond the barriers and attacks,
Provide us all with language to present the public with an overall picture of reform—just what are we getting for 1+Trillion Dollars.

On June 15th, 2009 President Obama gave a major speech to the American Medical Association in which he laid out his vision for health care reform. It was the best messaging we've seen on specific health reform issues. So, we dissected the speech according to these issue areas. For those who have questions about how to talk about the complex issues that surround health care reform they need to look no further than the Presidents words—they are spot on.

Our advice is to keep these messages handy, and use them! Not surprisingly, President Obama gets our Best Messaging of the Week Award.

Bob Crittenden,
The Herndon Alliance

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WHO TAKES THE BEST MESSAGING OF THE WEEK AWARD?

Message of the Week - June 22nd

The Positive Case:

"I am here today because I do not want our children and their children to still be speaking of a crisis in American medicine fifty years from now. I do not want them to still be suffering from spiraling costs we did not stem, or sicknesses we did not cure. I do not want them to be burdened with massive deficits we did not curb or a worsening economy we did not rebuild."

"I want them to benefit from a health care system that works for all of us; where families can open a doctor's bill without dreading what's inside; where parents are taking their kids to get regular checkups and testing themselves for preventable ailments; where parents are feeding their kids healthier food and kids are exercising more; where patients are spending more time with doctors and doctors can pull up on a computer all the medical information and latest research they'd ever want to meet that patient's needs; where orthopedists and nephrologists and oncologists are all working together to treat a single human being; where what's best about America's health care system has become the hallmark of America's health care system."

"That is the health care system we can build. That is the future within our reach. And if we are willing to come together and bring about that future, then we will not only make Americans healthier and not only unleash America's economic potential, but we will reaffirm the ideals that led you into this noble profession, and build a health care system that lets all Americans heal."

Cost of Doing Nothing:

“Make no mistake: the cost of our health care is a threat to our economy. It is an escalating burden on our families and businesses. It is a ticking time-bomb for the federal budget. And it is unsustainable for the United States of America.”

“If we do not fix our health care system, America may go the way of GM; paying more, getting less, and going broke.”

“But let there be no doubt—the cost of inaction is greater. If we fail to act, premiums will climb higher, benefits will erode further, and the rolls of uninsured will swell to include millions more Americans.”

“When it comes to the cost of our health care, then, the status quo is unsustainable. Reform is not a luxury, but a necessity.”

Making the Economic Case:

“To say it as plainly as I can, health care reform is the single most important thing we can do for America’s long-term fiscal health. That is a fact.”

If You Like What You Have You Can Keep It:

“So let me begin by saying this: I know that there are millions of Americans who are content with their health care coverage—they like their plan and they value their relationship with their doctor. And that means that no matter how we reform health care, we will keep this promise: If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor. Period. If you like your health care plan, you will be able to keep your health care plan. Period. No one will take it away. No matter what. My view is that health care reform should be guided by a simple principle: fix what’s broken and build on what works.”

“The first thing we need to do is protect what’s working in our health care system. Let me repeat—if you like your health care, the only thing reform will mean is your health care will cost less. If anyone says otherwise, they are either trying to mislead you or don’t have their facts straight.”

Cost Shifting:

“As we seek to contain the cost of health care, we must also ensure that every American can get coverage they can afford. We must do so in part because it is in all of our economic interests. Each time an uninsured American steps foot into an emergency room with no way to reimburse the hospital for care, the cost is handed over to every American family as a bill of about \$1,000 that is reflected in higher taxes, higher premiums, and higher health care costs; a hidden tax that will be cut as we insure all Americans. And as we insure every young and healthy American, it will spread out risk for insurance companies, further reducing costs for everyone.”

Responding to the Big Government—Wait in Line Attacks:

“We know the moment is right for health care reform. We know this is an historic opportunity we’ve never seen before and may not see again. But we also know that there are those who will try and scuttle this opportunity no matter what—who will use the same scare tactics and fear-mongering that’s worked in the past. They’ll give dire warnings about socialized medicine and government takeovers; long lines and rationed care; decisions made by bureaucrats and not doctors. We’ve heard it all before—and because these fear tactics have worked, things have kept getting worse.”

“So let me begin by saying this: I know that there are millions of Americans who are content with their health care coverage—they like their plan and they value their relationship with their doctor. And that means that no matter how we reform health care, we will keep this promise: If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor.

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Choices:

"If you don't like your health coverage or don't have any insurance, you will have a chance to take part in what we're calling a Health Insurance Exchange. This Exchange will allow you to one-stop shop for a health care plan, compare benefits and prices, and choose a plan that's best for you and your family—just as federal employees can do, from a postal worker to a Member of Congress. You will have your choice of a number of plans that offer a few different packages, but every plan would offer an affordable, basic package. And one of these options needs to be a public option that will give people a broader range of choices and inject competition into the health care market so that force waste out of the system and keep the insurance companies honest."

Public Option - Trojan horse for a single-payer system?

"What are not legitimate concerns are those being put forward claiming a public option is somehow a Trojan horse for a single-payer system. I'll be honest. There are countries where a single-payer system may be working. But I believe—and I've even taken some flak from members of my own party for this belief—that it is important for us to build on our traditions here in the United States. So, when you hear the naysayers claim that I'm trying to bring about government-run health care, know this—they are not telling the truth."

Individual & Business Responsibility:

"Indeed, it is because I am confident in our ability to give people the ability to get insurance that I am open to a system where every American bears responsibility for owning health insurance, so long as we provide a hardship waiver for those who still can't afford it. The same is true for

employers. While I believe every business has a responsibility to provide health insurance for its workers, small businesses that cannot afford it should receive an exemption. And small business workers and their families will be able to seek coverage in the Exchange if their employer is not able to provide it.”

Government Watchdog over the Insurance Industry:

“Insurance companies have expressed support for the idea of covering the uninsured—and I welcome their willingness to engage constructively in the reform debate. But what I refuse to do is simply create a system where insurance companies have more customers on Uncle Sam’s dime, but still fail to meet their responsibilities. That is why we need to end the practice of denying coverage on the basis of preexisting conditions. The days of cherry-picking who to cover and who to deny—those days are over.”

“This is personal for me. I will never forget watching my own mother, as she fought cancer in her final days, worrying about whether her insurer would claim her illness was a preexisting condition so it could get out of providing coverage. Changing the current approach to preexisting conditions is the least we can do—for my mother and every other mother, father, son, and daughter, who has suffered under this practice. And it will put health care within reach for millions of Americans.”

Cost:

“...there is no denying that it will come at a cost—at least in the short run. But it is a cost that will not—I repeat, not—add to our deficits. Health care reform must be and will be deficit neutral in the next decade.”

“...that sounds like a lot of money—and it is. But remember: it is less than we are projected to spend on the war in Iraq. And also remember: failing to reform our health care system in a way that genuinely reduces cost growth will cost us trillions of dollars more in lost economic growth and lower wages.”

Cuts to Medicare:

“But let me be clear: I am committed to making these cuts in a way that protects our senior citizens. In fact, these proposals will actually extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund by 7 years and reduce premiums for Medicare beneficiaries by roughly \$43 billion over 10 years. And I’m working with AARP to uphold that commitment.”