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## Federal Glover: The misinformation begin spread about health care reform does no one any good

By Federal Glover  
For the Contra Costa Times

Posted: 08/26/2009 01:38:19 PM PDT

IN RECENT DAYS, the volume around the health care reform debate has been amped up a few notches. Not only has it gotten louder, it has gotten nastier.

As the cost of health plan co-payments goes up and the price of medicine increases, it is clear that something must be done.

Everyone agrees that reform must take place. Health care costs have risen dramatically — far outpacing of the cost of living. The cost of employer health plans is driving American corporations out of business, stressing out benefit plans (including Contra Costa County's employee benefits), bankrupting ordinary Americans who have played by the rules all their lives and forcing the middle class into poverty.

Per person, America outspends every country in the world for health care yet we're near the bottom in infant mortality and life expectancy among industrialized countries.

It is cheaper to get American-made prescription medicine in Canada than to buy it in our own country.

All these subjects need to be addressed, but the shouting, anger and bullying tactics that has begun to appear at congress representatives' town halls are drowning out all civil discourse.

Perhaps it is best to hear from Contra Costa County's chief medical officer, Dr. William Walker. He has had to figure ways to deliver health care to thousands of county's residents amid severe cutbacks in funding and employee layoffs. Throughout this turmoil, he's kept his head and performed in a calm manner. In his podcast, this is what he has to say about health care reform:

"This is a critical time for national health care reform and we cannot let this opportunity to fix our broken system pass "...

"As Contra Costa County's Health Officer and a practicing physician for three decades, I see up close what happens to people when they don't have health insurance. With the current economic downturn, many more people are having to turn to the public health system for help. I am reminded daily of how desperate the situation is because so many people are without health insurance and there are fewer and fewer resources available to serve them.

"In all my career, I have never been so afraid of what may happen to the health of our communities. Public health systems are holding together the safety net with band-aids. Our emergency room is bursting at the seams and it is the same case for emergency rooms around the country. This health care crisis affects everyone.

"I am deeply concerned about the amount of misinformation that is circulating about what proposed health care reform will do. The rumors that people who have health insurance will be forced to give up their coverage and change doctors or that

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seniors would be euthanized are absurd and completely false. It is not surprising that people are repeating this kind of misinformation. Health reform is a very complicated and confusing subject. Everyone should be asking questions and looking for reliable answers.

"Unfortunately, some of the confusion is being encouraged by special interest groups with economic or political motives. Originally these groups agreed to support the administration's efforts to reform health care, but now they are scrambling to maintain their piece of the pie and are trying to incite fear and anxiety with false information. Look at the proposed health care reform language and you'll see the truth.

"Across the country, the faith community and other advocates who seek to improve our broken health care system, are trying to speak over the shouting. I applaud the efforts of groups like Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization, also known as CCISCO. They are encouraging truthful discussion on health care reform.

"I urge everyone to participate in forums where questions can be answered and the voice of the people can be heard.

"I understand that some people are worried about how change may affect them. The proposed reform doesn't take anything away from those with insurance. What it does do is give everyone affordable and adequate health care — which we all deserve and want for ourselves and our families.

"That's why it is so important for meaningful and constructive dialogue to take place. For all of our health, we must cut through all the rhetoric and embrace health care reform now."

In a town hall in Missouri, Sen. Claire McCaskill

faced stiff criticism. Amid cries of "socialized medicine," McCaskill asked the largely elderly opponents of health reform to raise their hands if they received Medicare health coverage.

When hundreds raised their hands, she responded by asking how many of them would like to give up the government-sponsored plan. No hands were raised.

Unfortunately, there are those special interests who want to retain the status quo at any cost or play political games as if the lives of ordinary folks didn't matter.

Listen carefully to the shouting and you can hear that the issue for critics isn't about health care at all. Besides the boogeyman issues such as the nonexistent death panels, the issues really being raised are trust of the government and the President. In other words, as one politician put it, critics are trying to create President Obama's "Waterloo."

The misinformation that is being spread and the baseless fear that is being sowed is not doing us — or our country — any good.

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