

Public health plan idea followed unlikely path

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Obama in the crossfire.

Former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards was the first Democratic presidential candidate to propose a public option as part of his health care plan, unveiled in 2007. Behind the scenes, his wife, Elizabeth, was a strong advocate of his decision.

In an interview, Elizabeth Edwards said that as the daughter of a Navy captain, she grew up with government health care and found it dependable. Later in life, her sojourn in the medical world as a breast cancer patient opened her eyes to the travails of people who had no insurance, or whose coverage turned out to be unreliable.

"I met people who were constantly coming up against one problem or another," Edwards said. "Even people like me, who have health care, know someone who has been through some misery because they couldn't afford the health care they needed."

Before the 2008 presidential campaign, chances were slim that lawmakers one day would consider government coverage for middle-class workers and their families. Liberals had talked for years about expanding Medicare to cover not just seniors, but all Americans. That's all it seemed to be — talk.

Then in 2001, political scientist Jacob Hacker proposed a plan he called "Medicare Plus." Employers could choose either to offer private insurance or pay a payroll tax to finance coverage for their employees through a health plan modeled on Medicare. Hacker, now at Yale University, retooled his proposal early in 2007 as the presidential campaign geared up. It caught on with core Democratic constituencies.

"The unions fell in love with Jacob's idea," said health econ-

mist Len Nichols of the New America Foundation.

Hacker said he wanted to bridge the gap between Democrats who supported a single payer plan like Medicare-for-all and those who wanted to preserve the employer coverage that has served most Americans for a half century.

"I tried to provide a case for seeing common ground between those two positions," Hacker said. "There's certainly a strong political argument that single payer is not feasible. Threatening (employer) coverage is a political nonstarter, and moving all health care spending onto the public budget is virtually impossible in the current fiscal climate."

Nonetheless, he said estimates showed his public plan would end up covering about half of workers and their families — gaining a powerful position in the market.

On the other side of the country, a Berkeley health policy professor had come up with the idea of a head-to-head competition between a government plan and private plans. Helen Halpin proposed such a scheme in 2002 for California, a state with a history of failed attempts to remake its health care system. The following year, she retooled the plan as a national proposal.

Called the CHOICE Option, Halpin's plan would let people decide whether they wanted government coverage or a private plan.

"May the best model win," Halpin said. "Depending on the preferences of the population, the system could evolve to single payer, but it would be a totally voluntary transition." Her bet: The government plan wins.

Edwards' health care adviser, Peter Harbage, said he was familiar with both Halpin's idea and Hacker's proposal, and they were

discussed in the campaign's deliberations.

"What Helen had here was the idea of choice, and choice as an option," said Harbage, now at the Center for American Progress. "The catch phrases people are using today were part of her paper."

Edwards decided on his health care plan after the campaign set up a private teleconference debate that featured two independent policy experts. One argued for a government-run system, while the other defended a market-based approach like Massachusetts has.

"We were both walking around with phones," said Elizabeth Edwards. "I was listening in." After the debate, her husband decided to go for the market-based approach — with a public option added.

Later on, Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton adopted the public plan. The idea remains popular with the public: a Kaiser Family Foundation poll this week found 59 percent of Americans support it.



Photo courtesy of Jeannie Barnes

Amber Olona thanks Rick Trice of International Bank for buying her hog at the sale Saturday night at the Colfax County Fair.

Denver songwriter headlines at Studio C

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made a commitment towards peace and the environment through music. We're committed to lowering our carbon footprint during our touring. We've outfitted our tour van to run on vegetable oil, gathering usable grease for fuel across the country."

The duo tours extensively, posting details, music samples, and schedules on Louise's website, www.gabriele-bruce.com. This weekend they bring their mix of roots, Americana, jazz, and folk music to Studio C's monthly entertainment event

as the start of a whirlwind New Mexico tour that continues to Las Vegas, Las Cruces, Truth or Consequences, Socorro, and Red River.

But before driving south from Des Moines, they'll back-track a bit Sunday to play a concert at the First Street Gallery

in Trinidad at 7:00 p.m. A \$10 cover charge there will benefit the Kiwanis Youth Arts Academy and Noah's Ark; the show is sponsored in part by the Arts & Culture Advisory Commission of the City of Trinidad.

THE FINE PRINT

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WEDNESDAY
Arthritis Exercise

Arthritis Exercise Class — Wed. 9 a.m. at Corazon Square & 1 p.m. at Early Learning Center. Registration & information call: 845-1133 ext. 224.

PAL Playgroup

PAL Playgroup meets every Wednesday at Alta Vista, 415 S. Indiana, 9:30-11 a.m. Moms and caregivers with infants, ages birth to 3. Playroom is also available for use Tues & Thurs same time. Information:

Martina at 846-4400.

Alzheimer's Support

The Alzheimer's Association Caregivers Support Group will meet from 10 a.m. to noon on Wednesday at the Carnegie Library. For more information, call (719) 868-3789.

Teen Maze Event

Recruitment Meeting scheduled for Weds. - 5 p.m. at the First Street Gallery — 150 East First Street. For volunteers/participants for the 1st Annual Teen Maze Event. Promoting community collaboration on teen well-being. For information call Lisa at 859-1991 or Tony at 680-2059.

La Casa - Fiesta

Meeting for all members - La Casa at 6:30 p.m. Wed. at La Casa in Jansen.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Carnegie Library

The Carnegie Public Library will be closed Mon. & Tues, Aug 24-25 for inventory. The library will resume its regular hours on Wed, Aug 26.

Artists Needed

The Fremont Center for the Arts is accepting entries for a new September Gallery Exhibit "Arkansas Valley Artists Showcase." Non-juried show to be judged by nationally recognized artist Tom Owen with cash awards. Entry forms available at the art center 5th & Macon or call 275-2790. Deadline for entry is Aug. 28. All area/region artists are invited.

District Health Dept

The Las Animas-Huerfano Counties Health Dept is anticipating a busy flu vaccine season. We are looking for individuals who can give us their time, talent, and effort to help keep our population healthy. We are especially interested in nurses and people with a health care related background. If you are interested please contact Kristy at the Trinidad office (719) 846-2213.

Free Foster Parent Class

The Las Animas County Dept of Human Services is hosting a Foster Parent Training Class on Friday Aug 28, 3-9 p.m. & Saturday, Aug 29, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., in our office at 204 S. Chestnut, Trinidad. To attend at no cost you must register by calling (719) 846-2276 and speak with Denisa Derrick

at ext 7129 or Frances Velasquez at ext 7137. Although the class is a requirement for prospective foster parents, it is open to anyone interested in making a difference in a child's life.

Electronics Recycling

Recycle electronics at the rehab center, one stop past UPS on Freedom Road, M-W-F 9 a.m.-3 p.m. For other recycling opportunities, pick up ReGroup's green and white bookmark at the library.

Pothole Repair

The City of Trinidad recognizes the importance of fixing potholes and keeping our roads in a state of good repair. The public can assist by reporting potholes. Call 719-846-9843 ext.125 to report the location of the pothole. City crews will make every possible effort to get the potholes repaired in a timely manner.

Fine Print Policy:

The Fine Print is a courtesy service offered by The Chronicle-News to inform the public of upcoming events. Fine Print items must be 30 words or less. We reserve the right to reword any submission to fit available space. Placement is not guaranteed and is subject to space available. When possible, the Fine Print will run three times — the day of the event and two days prior. PLEASE NOTE: Fine Prints must be received by NOON the day before publication — no exceptions. Please email Fine Print to news@trinidadchroniclenews.com. The Fine Print section is not for advertising. If you wish to advertise an event, please call Aileen Hood at (719) 846-3311 Ext. 5

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

08-13-09
Baby Girl Liles
Diane and Christopher Liles

Raton, N.M.

08-18-09
Baby Girl Shelby
Marylou Castro
Trinidad, Colo.

08-18-09
Baby Boy Bunker
Mindi and Jonathan Bunker
Raton, Colo.

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2009 YOUTH LEAGUE VOLLEYBALL AND FOOTBALL

Registration dates: Mon. Aug. 10 – Sat. Aug. 29

VOLLEYBALL

Grades: 4, 5 & 6 • Registration Fee: \$35

FLAG & YOUTH LEAGUE FOOTBALL

Flag football: Grades K-2 • Contact football: Grades 3 & 4, 5 & 6

Registration Fee: \$25 • Contact: \$40

A physical is required for contact football participants in grades 3 – 6

Turn in all registration forms to the Trinidad Community Center.
Questions? Contact the community center staff at (719) 846-4454.