

PNHP August Recess Campaign: Talking to Media at public events

Talking to reporters during a public event is one of the most important steps in telling your story. A news story gets your message out to your community and your elected officials, and can be amplified many times over through social media.

You've sent out press releases, prepared your materials and organized your fellow members to show up at the event. Now what?

- **Dress the part:** Health care providers are respected voices in the health care debate. Wear your white coat (or scrubs) and stethoscope to the event. Wear stickers and buttons with a "Medicare for All" slogan and carry a sign that identifies you and your position such as "Doctors support Medicare for all."
- **Introduce yourself to anyone who even looks like a reporter:** Just like many of us, reporters often struggle to navigate a crowd or talk to people they don't know. Starting a conversation with a reporter can make the difference between getting your story told or not. If you see a reporter, introduce yourself as a physician, explain why you are there; provide any materials you have and offer introductions to others in your group.
 - *Who in the room is a reporter?* Reporters often wear ID clips or lanyards (like a press pass), carry notepads, audio recorders, microphones and headphones. They tend to stand just outside the crowd. When in doubt, say hello. If the person is not a reporter, you've just made a new friend.
- **Be prepared for questions:** Reporters are average people who struggle with health care just like everyone. While they may be personally sympathetic to our movement, it is their job to ask tough questions. Before your event or interview, make a list of all the questions that may be asked of you and practice your answers.



For example:

- *Won't single payer lead to health care rationing?*
- *How will our country pay for it? Won't the federal government go bankrupt?*
- *Won't thousands of insurance workers be laid off?*

PNHP's "Frequently Asked Questions" page is an excellent resource:

<http://www.pnhp.org/facts/single-payer-faq>. Bookmark and share with your group ahead of the event. Brainstorm any additional questions and how you would answer them.

- **Stay on message!** While it's important to address the questions, be sure that your answer comes full circle: back to the benefits of Medicare for all. For example:
 - *Q: Won't Medicare for all result in health care rationing?*
A: No, and in fact, the U.S. already rations care based on income: if you can afford care, you get it; if you can't, you don't. A recent study found that more than 20,000 Americans die every year because they don't have health insurance. As a doctor, I see patients every day who skip or delay treatments that their insurance refuses to cover. That's rationing! Medicare for all would mean that every American can see the doctor of their choice when they need to, not just when they happen to have coverage.
- **Respect the reporter's time:** Most reporters have daily deadlines, which means they have to research, write and submit their news story by the end of the business day. If a reporter needs information or an interview, get back to her right away. If you can't give a reporter what she needs by her deadline, our side of the story simply won't be included.
- **Follow up:** Meeting a reporter at an event is a great opportunity to build an important relationship. Get the reporter's business card and be sure to send a follow-up email with extra information, event plans, and an invitation to work together in the future.

For example:

- *Hi Charlie, this is Dr. Smith from Physicians for a National Health Program's [ANYTOWN] Chapter. It was great to meet you at the town hall event yesterday. We discussed the number of deaths caused by uninsurance and I wanted to make sure you had a copy of the study for reference (attached). I also thought you might be interested in this event we have planned next month. Please let me know if you have any questions about Medicare for all. You can always reach me at this email or on my cell, 555-123-4567. Thanks!*



If you have questions regarding talking to media at public events, or if you need help answering a reporter's follow-up questions, please call our national office at (312) 782-6006 or email our communications specialist, Clare Fauke, at clare@pnhp.org.