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The Town Hall Protestors: Who Are They and Why Are They So Angry?

Written by John C. Goodman and Hugh Hewitt

The overwhelming majority of concerned citizens speaking up about health care reform at the August town hall meetings across the country are taking part in the process to express their genuine displeasure over the changes to our health care system proposed by President Barack Obama and the Democrats.

They have been accused of "spreading lies and distortions" by senior White House adviser David Axelrod, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) claims they are "being funded and organized by out-of-district special-interest groups and insurance companies," and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has gone so far as calling them "un-American."

While there may be a few top-down "astroturf" organizations and some special-interest groups getting more than their share of the media's attention, the identity of these outspoken Americans is not the mystery that some have portrayed it to be. Their motivation is not the result of some "organized opposition." Their anger is real.

We know. In just the past few weeks, we at the NCPA have heard from more than 1.1 million people who have signed an online petition at to express their opposition to nationalized health care. This petition also offers signers effective, patient-centered health reform solutions. We have sponsored with petition with Salem Radio Network, whose nationally syndicated radio hosts, Mike Gallagher, Bill Bennett, Michael Medved, Dennis Prager and Hugh Hewitt have helped us educate the public about the dangers of nationalized health care and the necessity for free-market health care reform. The petition signers are a diverse group, including individuals from a variety of backgrounds and interests, 40,000 of them former Obama supporters. We have heard from senior citizens concerned about cuts in Medicare and the possible closing of their private Medicare insurance plans, and a huge number of people who are simply concerned about the future of their health care.

These are truly the voices of a grassroots movement. It would impossible, even ridiculous to suggest, that the kind of spontaneous response we have witnessed could be organized by anyone.

There are many reasons for the anger evident at town halls nationwide, but the single biggest reason is the arrogance of our elected officials in Washington. For the past seven months, a small group of politicians has been quietly meeting with the most powerful special interest groups in the health care industry. The resulting special interest concessions will affect whether you will keep the insurance you have, where you will get new insurance and the cost you will pay.

Individuals and employers will also face fines for non-compliance and the government will be given a say in how your doctor practices medicine. We were not asked to offer our opinions in this process, but many people angered at these "reforms" are now taking the opportunity to be heard at town hall meetings.

The "Free Our Health Care Now!" petition effort also has given concerned citizens a chance and choice to be heard, online and on the air. On September 9th in Washington, D.C., the names and states of all petition signers will be delivered to members of Congress. On hand will be Congressional members Senator Kay Bailey Hutcheson (R-TX), Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC), House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH), House Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-VA), and Rep. John Shadegg (R-AZ). Hosting the event will be Former Governor and NCPA Chairman Pete du Pont, NCPA President and CEO John Goodman, and Salem Radio Hosts Mike Gallagher, Hugh Hewitt and Dennis Prager.

One final observation: most opponents of ObamaCare are much better informed than is commonly believed. At a typical town hall meeting, the citizens are usually better versed on the Obama plan than the member of Congress. If the President and some legislative leaders really do believe that these people who are speaking up against a nationalized health care system are organized or funded by anyone, then they are completely out of touch with the American people. Attacking their character and their motives and intentionally distorting the truth will only add to the anger people already feel.