

## **A Background History of California Single Payer Legislation: 1998 - 2017**

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1998 Health Care for All-California helps draft Senate Bill 2123, which calls for establishing a single payer universal health care system. The authors are Democratic Senators Barbara Lee (Oakland) and Diane Watson (Los Angeles). HCA initiates a statewide campaign to pass SB 2123. After the bill is revised and passed by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, it calls for a comparison of different models of financing universal health care, including single payer.

HCA helps draft Senate Concurrent Resolution 100, which calls for a study to compare different models of financing universal health care. Each model must provide the same high quality benefits, which are defined in the bill. The content of SCR 100 is authorized by Senate President, John Burton, and supported by leaders of the Senate and Assembly.

The text and legislative history of every bill cited in this Background History can be read by entering the bill number and selecting the appropriate year at: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>

1999 HCA helps draft SB 480, which requires: 1) a process for stakeholders to address the issues facing the state in providing universal health care; 2) a report from the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS) to the legislature on the results of the process to examine the options for providing universal health care; and 3) enactment of universal health care for all California residents by a "date certain" (i.e., July 1, 2003). The author is Democratic Senator Hilda Solis (Los Angeles). HCA initiates a statewide campaign to pass SB 480. After the "date certain" language is removed, the bill passes the Senate and Assembly. SB 480 has 6 co-authors (1 Senator and 5 Assembly Members). HCA initiates a campaign to lobby Democratic Governor Gray Davis. Newspaper editorials and op-eds call on the Gov. Davis to sign SB 480, and he does.

(Note: The vote on every bill cited in this Background History is on a party-line basis. Although not every Democrat voted in favor of each bill, either when it was in a committee or on the floor of the Assembly or Senate, no Republican ever voted for any of these bills.)

2000 By the authority of leaders of the Assembly and Senate, a panel of national health care experts, the Universal Health Care Technical Advisory Committee (UHCTAC), meets to review the status of the study called for by SB 480, evaluate different proposals for conducting the study, and issue a report of recommendations. The UHCTAC report draws on HCA's own recommendations, which include: the government should be the client for the study; advocates of a particular model of universal health care should devise that model; methods and assumptions used for the study should be transparent; there should be competitive bidding by modelers; and the quality criteria defined in SCR 100 should be applied to each. HCA initiates a statewide campaign to augment the budget so that CHHS can implement SB 480. The legislature approves \$600,000. Gov. Davis authorizes \$200,000.

HCA initiates a statewide campaign to have Gov. Davis apply for a federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to conduct a comparative analysis of different models of universal health care. The funds would enable implementation of SB 480. HRSA's budget can only fund 11 of the 20 proposals HRSA approves. California is one of nine states not awarded a grant. HCA leads a statewide campaign to augment the federal budget. With support for the campaign from U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi (San Francisco), Congress increases HRSA's budget by \$15 million. California's "Health Care Options Project" (HCOP) receives \$1.2 million.

2001 HCA initiates a statewide campaign to guarantee full participation by representatives of the legislature and health care stakeholders in the SB480/HCOP process and to have CHHS utilize the recommendations of the UHCTAC report. The Senate and Assembly budget subcommittees for health hold hearings about implementation of SB480/HCOP and support HCA's goals. CHHS creates the Advisory Group for the SB480/HCOP process. There are representatives of state and local governments and a broad range of

health care stakeholders. CHHS approves nine proposals for the study. There are three universal single payer proposals, as well as six proposals to increase health coverage through public program expansions, employer and/or individual tax credits, subsidies and/or mandates, or a combination of approaches.

HCA initiates a campaign to have CHHS contract for an analysis of how well each proposal satisfies health care quality measurements, in addition to how much each proposal expands health coverage and how much the expansion costs. CHHS contracts with The Lewin Group to analyze and compare the cost and coverage impacts of the nine proposals, using a micro-simulation model. CHHS also contracts with AZA Consulting to analyze the quality and access impacts of the proposals.

The nine HCOP proposals and the reports by The Lewin Group and AZA Consulting are posted at: <http://www.statecoverage.org/files/The%20California%20Health%20Care%20Options%20Project%20-%20Status%20Update.pdf>

2002 CHHS and the California State Library/California Research Bureau sponsor five public symposia, which are held in Fresno, Oakland, Manhattan Beach and Sacramento (twice). The authors describe their proposals, and The Lewin Group and AZA Consulting report their findings. The authors use public input to revise their proposals. The Lewin Group and AZA Consulting submit their final documents to CHHS. At the end of his presentation at the last symposium at the capitol, John Shiels of The Lewin Group says, “One of the major claims of the single payer advocates for a long time has been that we could cover more people, for more services, for less money. Our study is showing that, for these very carefully designed plans, that's true. To the best of our ability to estimate it, that's true.”

In August, HCA starts convening monthly meetings in Sacramento with representatives from a wide range of organizations. The goals are: introduce a single payer bill in the next legislative session; select a legislator as the author of the bill; and build a grassroots movement in support of the bill. Several Assembly Members and Senators compete to be selected. The organizations unanimously choose Democratic Senator Sheila Kuehl (Santa Monica). The legislation is developed from recommendations from the public, health care stakeholders and features from the three HCOP single payer plans.

2003 Sen. Kuehl introduces SB 921, The Health Care for All Californians Act. The Health Care for All Californians Campaign is created, comprising many statewide organizations. Regional meetings are held to involve local groups in the campaign. A large lobbying campaign helps to get SB 921 passed by the Senate. However, the language is revised so that it is only the “intent” of the bill to create a single payer system (enacting the bill would not actually create the system). In October, Gray Davis is recalled as governor and replaced with Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger.

2004 Predictions that SB 921 will be voted down in the Assembly Health Committee by a combination of moderate Democrats and Republicans are proved wrong. After a massive lobbying campaign, all of the Democrats vote for the bill. However, it goes no farther in the Assembly. SB 921 has 26 co-authors (6 Senators and 20 Assembly Members). It is endorsed by more than 500 statewide or local organizations.

HCA raises \$90,000 to hire The Lewin Group to analyze the financial impact of providing universal health care to all Californians through SB 921 (the version of the bill as of April 2004).

2005 Sen. Kuehl releases The Lewin Group report (“The Health Care For All Californians Act: Cost and Economic Impacts Analysis), which analyzes the economic impact of SB 921 on specific groups, such as employers that do and do not provide health insurance, and individuals and families that are self-insured or insured through employers or are not insured. The findings show the health care financing model on which SB 921 was based can provide every Californian with comprehensive health coverage and that it can reduce overall health care costs and control health care cost inflation. If the model were implemented in 2006, the cumulative savings between what would be spent without the plan and what would be spent under it would be \$8 billion in the first year and \$343.6 billion from 2006-2015.

The report is posted at: [http://www.healthcareforall.org/downloads/cat\\_view/Health%20Care%20Reform%20Research](http://www.healthcareforall.org/downloads/cat_view/Health%20Care%20Reform%20Research)

Sen. Kuehl introduces SB 840, the California Health Insurance Reliability Act, which substantially amends SB 921 and omits language about financing the single payer system. Advocates garner hundreds of endorsements from organizations, co-authorships from legislators, thousands of letters of support from individuals, and place op-eds in many newspapers. The Senate passes SB 840.

2006 In January, the California Alliance for Legislative Action (later to become the California Health Professions Student Alliance, CaHPSA) and the California Physicians Alliance (later to become Physicians for a National Health Program-California, PNHP-CA) organize their first Lobby Day, which becomes a large annual event. Hundreds of health professional students visit legislators to lobby for passage of the single payer bill. Before the lobbying, the students and hundreds more single payer supporters from many other organizations hold a rally outside the capitol.

In the following months, a huge campaign by advocacy organizations and unions successfully lobbies the Assembly to pass SB 840. It has 43 co-authors (13 Senators and 30 Assembly Members). The California legislature is the first in U.S. history to pass a bill for single payer universal health care. Demonstrations at the capitol and in Los Angeles demand the governor “Sign this bill!” In an op-ed in the San Diego Union-Tribune, Schwarzenegger announces he will veto the bill because it is “socialized medicine.” This generates a lot of press coverage, and a rebuttal of the governor’s statements by Sen. Kuehl. Schwarzenegger vetoes SB 840.

On Aug. 12, the 365-City Campaign starts in Morro Bay. Every day for a year there is an event in the state’s next largest city in support of SB 840. The campaign is a project of OneCareNow, which is initiated by HCA, in partnership with other organizations.

Following meetings between HCA and the California School Employees Association (CSEA), the State Strategy Group (SSG) is formed. Over the next four years many advocacy organizations and labor unions join it and plan campaigns via monthly conference calls or face-to-face meetings.

2007 Sen. Kuehl reintroduces SB 840, renamed the California Universal Healthcare Act. At a special Assembly Health Committee educational hearing, Sen. Kuehl shows the HCA video, “The Healthcare Solution: California OneCare.” (It is posted on YouTube.) Hearings on SB 840 are packed with supporters. With support from advocacy groups and unions, especially the CSEA, the California Nurses Association hosts two large rallies outside the capitol. (Videos are posted on YouTube.) The second rally features Michael Moore, who also testifies at a special hearing chaired by Sen. Kuehl. At a local movie theater, Moore twice screens his new film, SiCKO -- first for activists and then for legislators and staff.

In June and July, at theaters throughout the state, activists hand out flyers to people on line to see SiCKO. The flyers feature an endorsement of SB 840 by Michael Moore and a postcard that can be filled out to show support for the bill. The postcards have prepaid postage and can easily be removed from the flyers. CSEA covers the cost of printing 300,000 flyers and the postage for the postcards. Over 50,000 postcards are collected.

On Aug. 11, the 365-City Campaign ends with 3,000 single payer supporters in front of L.A. City Hall for the “Great Healthcare Rally,” which is posted on YouTube. Speakers include Sen. Kuehl, Lily Tomlin, Lt. Gov. John Garamendi, Executive Treasurer of the L.A. County Federation of Labor Maria Elena Durazo, and spokespersons from the SSG.

The Senate passes SB 840. The Assembly Health Committee also passes SB 840. Although the bill can pass the Assembly, it is not brought to a vote because Gov. Schwarzenegger vows to veto it. This keeps SB 840 alive for organizing in 2008.

2008 In February, the SSG sponsors a State Strategic Summit in L.A, which is attended by over 300 single payer activists. Among the results of the Summit, a Healthy Majority Campaign is launched to elect two-thirds majorities in the Assembly and Senate. (It will take a two-thirds majority in each house to override a governor’s veto of a single payer policy bill and/or to pass legislation that finances a policy bill.)

(Note: A two-thirds majority of Democrats in the Assembly and the Senate is not the same as a two-thirds majority who will vote for a single payer policy bill and a financing bill. A Healthy Majority is a two-thirds pro-single payer legislature.)

In June, thousands rally for single payer bills, SB 840 and HR 676, outside San Francisco's Moscone Center West, the site of a national convention for America's Health Insurance Plans, which is the trade association for insurers. The rally's theme is: Healthcare YES – Insurance Companies NO. Sen. Kuehl is among the speakers. Smaller support rallies are held in 18 other cities.

A report from the Legislative Analyst's Office finds that the model used to fund SB 840 in 2006 would not be enough to fund it 2011. The deficit projected by the LAO is tantamount to the cost to the state resulting from the Schwarzenegger's veto of SB 840 in 2006.

The legislature sends SB 840 to Gov. Schwarzenegger for his signature. It has 48 co-authors (15 Senators and 33 Assembly Members). In its four years in the legislature, SB 840 garners endorsements from nearly 800 statewide and local organizations. On Sept. 8, HCA publishes a half-page ad in the Sacramento Bee and a few local newspapers. Above a photo of a young, shirtless, bicep-flexing Schwarzenegger, large text says, "Governor Schwarzenegger: Austria's Guaranteed Health Care Keeps Austrians Healthy. Now You Can Guarantee Health Care for All Californians. Sign (Do Not Veto) SB 840 (Kuehl)." The names of more than 400 persons who each contributed \$100 to pay for the publication are listed in the ad. That same day, after the SSG organizes a large rally with Sen. Kuehl outside the capitol, a delegation delivers the 50,000 SiCKO postcards to the governor's office. Schwarzenegger vetoes SB 840.

Because Kuehl is termed out, the SSG chooses to replace her with Sen. Mark Leno (San Francisco and Marin Counties). In a statement, he says, "I applaud Sen. Kuehl, the OneCareNow Campaign and all of the statewide organizations and advocates for their tireless fight for affordable, accessible health care for all Californians. We will bring this issue back again and again until everyone in California has access to high quality health care that puts people before insurance company profits." In November, the Healthy Majority Campaign helps turn three Assembly districts from Republican to Democratic.

2009 Sen. Leno introduces SB 810, which retains the language of SB 840. It passes the Senate.

2010 In March, California OneCare (COC, which has become an organization separate from HCA) begins the 365 Ad Campaign. Every day for a year a 30-second spot is posted in support of single payer. The videos feature celebrities, politicians, health care survivors, and single payer activists.

In July at UCLA, the SSG sponsors the first "Summer Conference," called "Post Affordable Care Act: Where Do We Go from Here?" Over 100 single payer activists attend. (Documents/videos are posted at: <http://pnhpcalifornia.org/conferences/>)

After the Assembly Health and Appropriations Committees pass SB 810, some Assembly Members, including a couple elected with the help of single payer activists, ask Speaker John Pérez not to bring SB 810 to a floor vote. They are afraid that if they abstain, there will be a backlash against them from their Democratic constituents, but if they vote for the bill, it will energize Republican voters in their districts to unseat them. Pérez lets the bill die. There are 47 coauthors (15 Senators and 32 Assembly Members). In November, activists in the Healthy Majority Campaign insist on pledges of support for single payer from targeted candidates in exchange for help to get them elected. Jerry Brown is elected governor.

After the elections, the SSG begins a process to replace its informal coalition with one that has more structure and to create a new campaign.

2011 Sen. Mark Leno reintroduces SB 810. Unexpectedly, there is doubt whether the Senate Health Committee will pass the bill. After an emergency statewide lobbying campaign, it does pass.

The SSG ends by creating the Steering Committee (SC), which creates the Campaign for a Healthy California. Several regional coalitions for the CHC are formed throughout the state, and regular conference calls take place with the Campaign Coordinator and regional coalition coordinators.

In July at USC, the CHC sponsors the second Summer Conference, called “Building the Movement for Single Payer.” Over 250 single payer activists attend. (Documents/videos are posted at: <http://pnhpcalifornia.org/conferences/>)

By the end of the year there is widespread opinion at the capitol that SB 810 cannot pass the Senate Appropriations Committee in January. The CHC mounts the largest-ever grassroots campaign for any California single payer bill.

2012 In January, the Senate Appropriations Committee passes SB 810, which marks a strong victory for the single payer movement. There are 35 coauthors (12 Senators and 23 Assembly Members). Despite an unprecedented grassroots call-in campaign that overwhelms the phone-lines at Senate offices, SB 810 fails on the Senate floor by two votes. It needs 21 and gets 19, with two Democrats voting against it, and four Democrats abstaining.

In February, CHC activists at the state Democratic Convention distribute 5,000 copies of a flyer that denounces these six Senators for voting against the state party platform, which supports single payer. The flyer cites the tens of thousands of dollars each Senator has received from the pharmaceutical and/or insurance industry. The flyer is a big hit among party activists at the convention.

From June 19 – July 12, CHC co-sponsors, with the CNA and PNHP-CA, the Medicare for All Cali Tour, a bus tour that stops at 19 cities. The tour is scheduled during the time-period when the Supreme Court is expected to rule on the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). At each stop, there is a health screening from 3-6pm and a town hall meeting beginning at 6:30pm. The events on the tour promote “Improved Medicare for All.” (The schedule of stops and more information about the tour are posted at: <http://www.nationalnursesunited.org/blog/entry/all-aboard-the-healthcare-express>)

In July at USC, the CHC sponsors the third Summer Conference, called “Organizing for Healthcare Justice in California.” Over 120 single payer activists attend. (Documents/videos are posted at: <http://pnhpcalifornia.org/conferences/>)

In September, the CNA announces to the SC that it does not support the introduction of a single payer bill in the coming 2013-2014 legislative session. The other organizations in the SC disagree. A “dual track” approach is accepted by everyone at the SC meeting, in which efforts will be made to work with Gov. Brown to get single payer supporters at the table for the implementation of the ACA as well as to get a single payer bill introduced in both the Senate and the Assembly.

In October, some SC members, including a representative of the CNA, meet with Sen. Leno to find out about his commitment to continuing to author SB 810. He says that, because the bill cannot pass in the Senate, there is no justification for him to re-introduce the bill. He recommends that the bill should be introduced in the Assembly instead. He reasons that there will be many new members elected in November and there has been no education and lobbying about the bill in the Assembly for several years.

In November, the Democrats attain supermajorities in the Assembly and the Senate.

The SC undertakes an extensive effort to get an Assembly Member to agree to author the bill. The CNA informs the other SC organizations that its position is not to support the introduction of single payer legislation in the coming session. The CNA also makes its position known at the capitol.

2013 In February, following the eighth annual Lobby Day rally, CaHPSA members ask the last remaining Assembly Members on a list of potential authors if any of them will introduce a single payer bill. None is willing. The session begins without single payer legislation for the first time in a decade.

2017 State Senators Ricardo Lara (Bell Gardens) and Toni Atkins (San Diego) jointly introduce SB 562, the Californians A Healthy California Act. The bill states, “It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that would establish a comprehensive universal single-payer health care coverage program and a health care cost control system for the benefit of all residents of the state.” A study of the fiscal impact of the program, as proposed by SB 562, is being conducted by Robert Pollin (professor of economics, University of Massachusetts/Amherst), to be released in mid-May.

The bill is posted at: [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180SB562](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB562)

On February 22, hundreds of supporters (especially from the CNA and HCA) rally at the state capitol to launch the campaign to pass SB 562.

On April 26, nearly a thousand single payer supporters (especially from the CNA), from all over California, fill a huge hall at the Sacramento Convention Center, march to the capitol, and pack the auditorium (with spillover to other locations) for the Senate Health Committee hearing on SB 562. Senators Lara and Atkins, as well as CNA staff, speak for the bill and answer questions from committee members. Spokespersons for the opposition represent Kaiser Permanente, California Association of Health Plans and the California Chamber of Commerce. The bill passes 5 – 2, with two abstentions, and goes to the Senate Appropriations Committee.