



Written by [Steven Yates](#) on August 10, 2009

Protests Continue at Town Meetings Devoted to Healthcare

Healthcare reform is currently the hottest issue on the table. Congress has adjourned for the summer, but as its members hold town hall meetings devoted to discussions of Barack Obama's health care plan, H.R. 3200 — called "Obamacare" by its detractors — they are finding themselves confronted by angry, vocal constituents.

Some, sensing the anger, have backed down from holding public meetings altogether. Brad Miller (D-N.C.) alleges that he received a death threat from a constituent when he declined to hold a town meeting.



[In Michigan](#), a town hall meeting erupted to the point where police were called. Long-standing healthcare reform supporter John Dingall (D-Mich.) faced angry opponents who far outnumbered the handful of supporters. One man had gotten in Dingall's face and told him, "You're a fraud, you have not read the bill!" The man, Mike Sola, has a son disabled by cerebral palsy, and said that Obama's bill would not help his disabled son. Police finally stepped in and compelled Sola to leave the meeting. "Fascist America!" he was heard to shout as he was escorted out.

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The crowd was not mollified. Another man demanded, "How are you paying for it? Where is the money coming from?"

The handful of supporters chanted, "Healthcare now," waving signs of support.

Opponents remained dominant, chanting back, "Kill the bill!"

Michigan, where the loss of manufacturing jobs especially in the automotive industry has sent unemployment almost to Great Depression levels, has become a cauldron of anger. Most of that anger is directed against government, which has bailed out corporations deemed "too big to fail" and stands accused of attempting to nationalize the healthcare and insurance industries in the United States.

Vocal protests against "Obamacare" have erupted at town hall meetings [all across the country](#), however. In Saratoga, N.Y., roughly 20 protesters showed up at the meeting held by Scott Murphy (D-N.Y.) carrying signs reading "Obamacare Seniors Beware! Rationing is here!" and "If socialized medicine is best, then why didn't Ted Kennedy go to Canada?" Kennedy (D-Mass.) is currently battling brain cancer.

At another meeting, the likeness of a Maryland congressman was hanged in effigy. At still another, the tombstone of a Texas congressman was displayed.

Democrats, who now control both houses in Congress as well as the White House, [blame a conservative cabal](#) they contend is producing a movement posing as grassroots — "astroturf," they are calling it. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) have called the



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protests "un-American." In a [USA Today opinion piece](#) they charged that "an ugly campaign is underway not merely to misrepresent the health insurance reform legislation, but to disrupt public meetings and prevent members of Congress and constituents from conducting a civil dialogue."

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) also charged, "This is clearly being orchestrated, and these folks have instructions. They come down from a Texas lobbyist in Washington." Durbin defended a plan by the White House which has raised hackles on its own, to track and rebut "rumors" about the president's health care plan. Republicans contend that this is an effort to intimidate opponents of Obama-style healthcare reform.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) calls such allegations "absurd." He told Fox News Sunday, "I think attacking citizens in our country for expressing their opinions about an issue of this magnitude may indicate some weakness in their position on the merits. And I also think it's particularly absurd for Democrats, who have over an \$8 million email list over at the DNC [Democratic National Committee] called Organize America, to be criticizing citizens for being organized."

"Frankly," McConnell concluded, "the truth of the matter is we don't know who's organized and who isn't. The point is the issue, the substance. They need to deal with it. Americans are concerned about it."

Members of the left have been using disruptive tactics for years, especially against conservative speakers on college and university campuses. These protests are generally orchestrated by outsiders. It is interesting that liberals would cry foul when conservatives, many of whom see themselves as locked out of the national conversation, adopt these very same methods.

Worst of all, many in Congress do appear not to have read the bill, placing them at a disadvantage in discussing with constituents what it does or does not contain. The White House has put up a website contending that allegations, e.g., about health care rationing, or mandatory end-of-life counseling for the elderly, are false.



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