

Winning The Single-Payer Ballot Initiative in Your District

In 2010, residents in fourteen state representative districts will vote on a non-binding local ballot question, asking whether their legislator should support single-payer, "Medicare-for-All" legislation for Massachusetts. This is a guide with suggested actions to take to *win* the ballot initiative in your district. This guide comes with a to-do list with check-off boxes, as well as a calendar to fill in.

For the language of the ballot initiative, all available materials for download, and a list of districts, go to Mass-Care's website here:

<http://masscare.org/voteyes2010/>

1. Develop and Implement a Media Strategy

A good way to reach engaged voters and educate them about the upcoming ballot initiative will be through local radio, television, and newspaper. If receive an invitation to speak on radio or television, and would prefer to be accompanied by an expert on single-payer reform, contact Mass-Care and we will find a qualified speaker who can join you.

a. Messaging

The message we will focus on for this election cycle will be "Vote Yes for Health Care: Medicare for All." For most voters, they will not yet know that a health care question is on the ballot, and Medicare will be the most easy reference point to understand a proposal for single-payer health care. Secondly, we will focus on the importance of bringing down the costs of health care by cutting out for-profit middlemen, and making health care affordable without shifting costs onto workers and businesses.

b. Radio

Build a list of local radio stations with news programs, along with contact information. Call up the show hosts or program director to ask if they would be willing to do a show on health reform, given the upcoming ballot question. You can also call in to shows discussing the elections, and mention that there will also be a health reform ballot question on in the district (most radio stations will reach a larger

geographic region than just the district where the ballot question is appearing, so you will need to make the discussion relevant to a broader audience).

To find a list of radio stations in your area, start with this online listing (which may not be comprehensive):

<http://www.officialusa.com/stateguides/media/radiostations/massachusetts.html>

c. Community Access Television

Call your local cable access stations to see if any regular programs would be interested in interviewing you and a health care expert on health reform, including the upcoming ballot question. Alternatively, we can provide you with a DVD of a program recorded elsewhere in the state, which your local station may be willing to run.

To find a list of community access stations in Massachusetts, check here:

<http://www.communitymedia.se/cat/linksma.htmTV>

d. Local Newspapers

Many residents read their local newspapers more closely than statewide or national news. Ideally, you would like local newspapers to cover the upcoming ballot initiative favorably on their own. They can do this by having a reporter write a piece on the ballot question, or by writing an editorial supporting the ballot question. The best way to accomplish this is to ask for a meeting or a phone conversation with the editor, and to explain what single payer health care would mean for the district.

Alternatively, supporters in the district can submit op-eds and letters to the editor in support of the ballot initiative. Some local papers may be willing to publish submissions on this topic several weeks in a row, but some may only publish one. You want your op-ed to appear later in October, it should be from someone with a recognizable name in the community if possible, and it should focus on the local impact of single payer reform and the importance of this movement even after national health reform.

For a partial list of local newspapers in Massachusetts, start with this list:

<http://www.nenpa.com/massachusettsNewspapers>

2. Outreach and Education

Outside of the media, it will be valuable to reach out to organizations and individuals in the community in person, both to identify supporters, as well as to educate voters. This will require reaching out to people on lists that are available to us, and reaching out to community organizations active in the district. Lastly, it is important to educate candidates for the representative seat – to make sure that they understand the case for single payer health care if the ballot passes – and to educate other elected officials, to make sure they are aware the district will be voting on this important issue, and prepared to take action when the district votes “yes.”

2:A. Contact Lists

There are several lists we have for each district, which you can call through to ask if anyone would be interested in helping out with work on the ballot initiative in the next month, or just if they would like to stay in touch about health care in the future. The first list is the list of 200+ voters who signed signature sheets to get the question on the ballot! You will have to look up their phone numbers online to call them. The other lists will be the Mass-Care and Jobs with Justice membership databases for your district: make sure you have these lists from Mass-Care.

2:B. Community Organizations

There are some community organizations and communities of faith with membership in most districts across the state, but you will also have to build a list of unique groups active in your community. Reach out to these local groups and ask if you could give a presentation to their October board meeting or membership meeting, and if they would be willing to do education work with their membership or vote to support the ballot question. Build your own list of organizations to reach out to, and you can also look for these groups who have membership in most parts of the state:

Most Central Labor Councils of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO have endorsed single payer reform:

<http://www.massflcio.org/central-labor-councils>

The *League of Women Voters of Massachusetts* endorses single-payer health reform:

<http://www.lwvma.org/otherleagues.shtml>

The *Mass Senior Action Council* endorses single payer health reform, and has regional chapters listed with their monthly meeting days:

<http://www.masssenioraction.org/templates/System/details.asp?id=40030&PID=677421>

To reach other seniors, look for a local *Council on Aging* in your district by searching Google at:

<http://google.com>

Local *rotary clubs* usually have weekly meetings, and will often be willing to accept a speaker on a topical issue. Go here:

<http://www.rotary.org/en/aboutus/sitertools/clublocator/pages/ridefault.aspx>

1. First select "United States" from the "Area/Country" bar,
2. Select "MA" from the "State/Province" bar
3. Enter city/town under "Enter name of county or district"
4. Click "Search" - will list day, time, and location of meetings/contact information

Similarly, local *Kiwanis clubs* will often host speakers:

<http://sites.kiwanis.org/Kiwanis/en/MembershipInterest/FindAClub.asp>

1. Enter zip code and hit "Go" - will list day, time, and location of meetings
2. Check off "Interested in club membership" to be contacted by someone from the club directly

The *Unitarian Universalist Association* has endorsed single payer health reform, and you can find local congregations here:

<http://www.uua.org/>

The *United Methodist Church* has also endorsed single payer health reform, and you can find local churches by entering a zip code here:

<http://www.umc.org/>

Contact other churches, synagogues, mosques, and communities of faith in your district to see if they would be interested in learning about the ballot initiative as well!

2:C. Educate Candidates and Local Elected Officials

Many elected officials and elected bodies will not be willing to endorse the ballot question before residents have had a chance to vote on the question, but it is important to educate them about single payer reform and put the ballot question on their radar. Local elected bodies may also be a good place to recruit individuals interested in helping. Ask for a meeting or phone conversation with candidates for the representative district the vote will take place in, and ask if local governance bodies would be willing to allow a speaker to make a short presentation on the upcoming health care ballot question at their October meeting.

Find the 2010 Primary Candidates for your Representative District here:

http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/ele10/primary_candidates.htm

(Scroll down to 'Representative in General Court.')

Find the web-site for the cities and/or towns in your district here, and look up contact information for the local town halls, board of aldermen, city council, or other form of local government:

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/electk/clkidx.htm>

Find contact information for Democratic Town Committees here:

<http://www.massdems.org/getlocal/chairslist.cfm>

2:D. Leaflet and Recruit Volunteers at Public Events & Locations

Large public events such as festivals, fairs, or concerts, can be a great way to educate a large number of constituents about the upcoming ballot initiative, and to recruit volunteers. Build a calendar of upcoming events, and assign volunteers to table at these events or just walk around with a clip board and handouts.

Local newspapers can be the best place for listings of large public events in the district, but many events across the state are listed on the Boston Globe calendar:

<http://calendar.boston.com/>

(Just enter a city or town central to your district under the "Near" field.)

And many festivals and fairs in the state are listed here:
<http://festivalnet.com/state/massachusetts/ma.html>
(Enter zip code, distance, and check "2010 dates only")

Finally, you can reach people at locations frequented by residents, such as "transfer stations" in communities without curbside trash pickup, or pedestrian districts on the weekends.

3. Visibilities

A good education strategy when you do not have a large number of volunteers or volunteer-hours is to hold "visibilities" at high-traffic locations in the district during commuter hours. These can be car-oriented visibilities, where volunteers hold signs supporting the single payer ballot initiative at a busy traffic intersection during rush hour. Visibilities can also effectively target pedestrian traffic, allowing more interaction and also the possibility of recruiting supportive residents to help out. At least one or two visibilities should be planned for November 1, the day before the election.

Second, lawn signs can be an effective way to build visibility for the ballot initiative. If working with limited lawn signs, figure out which supporters of the ballot question live on streets with high traffic passing through! You can reuse lawn signs to dress the polls the night before election day.

4. Election Day!

On election day, we will have two primary goals. The first is to “dress” the polls the night before the election: to hang signs supporting the ballot question at polling places in the district (by law, you will be required to hang these a certain distance from the polling place). Ideally, every poll in the district will be dressed, but if you have limited volunteer hours or limited signs, target the highest volume polling stations or those representing communities most likely to be supportive. Secondly, we want to have actual volunteers holding signs, reaching out to voters outside of polling places on the day of the election. Again, with limited volunteers, target polling places strategically, and focus on the morning and late afternoon voting rushes.

Local clerks at cities and towns will have a list of polling places - each precinct will have one, but often multiple precincts will vote at the same polling location. Some cities/towns will have lists of polling places on their web-site.

Contact information for local clerks can be found here:

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleclk/clkidx.htm>

To look up a map of your district, go here:

<http://w5.melissadata.com/lookups/MapStateLegV.asp?InState=ma>

5. Stay in Touch with Mass-Care and the Other Districts!

If you have any questions, email Mass-Care at info@masscare.org, to learn what the other districts are doing or get support for anything!