



**Common Dreams**  
Breaking News & Views for the Progressive Community

[DONATE](#)

[SIGN UP FOR NEWSLETTER](#)

See

Thursday, April 30, 2015

[Home](#)  
[Canada](#)  
[Economy](#)

[World](#)  
[Climate](#)  
[Rights](#)

[U.S.](#)  
[War & Peace](#)  
[Solutions](#)

TRENDING: [➤ It's On: Bernie 2016](#) [➤ Black Lives in Baltimore](#) [➤ Fast Track to Hell](#) [➤ Disaster in Nepal](#)

*Published on Thursday, January 08, 2015 by Common Dreams*

# 'We Won't Back Down': Vermonters Launch Sit-In At Statehouse Demanding Universal Health Care 'Now!'

Burned by governor, protesters occupy House Chamber, saying they will not leave until Green Mountain Care law respected

by Sarah Lazare, staff writer



Nearly four years ago, Vermont became the first U.S. state to pass a law for universal, publicly-funded health care. This photograph depicts a 2011 rally at the Vermont Capitol. (Photo: Vermont Workers' Center)

### **Update 1/9/2015 11:30 AM EST:**

After holding the floor of the Vermont legislature in Montpelier for several hours, 29 protesters demanding universal health care were arrested Thursday night. James Haslam, director of the Vermont Workers' Center, appeared on *Democracy Now!* Friday morning to recap the day of action:

### **Earlier 1/8/2015 5:00 PM EST:**

Protesters occupied the chambers of the Vermont statehouse on Thursday afternoon, saying they refuse to leave until legislators meet their demands to respect the first-ever U.S. law for universal, publicly-funded health care, won by grassroots movements nearly four years ago yet stymied by the governor last month.

The demonstration is a response to the mid-December announcement by Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin that he seeks to unilaterally **abandon** the universal health care plan, passed into law in 2011 under **Act 48** and named Green Mountain Care, even though the governor used the groundbreaking legislation to **bolster** his candidacy.

Timed to coincide with Shumlin's "state of the state" address, Thursday's sit-in—still ongoing at the time of publication—was staged by approximately 30 people, with "many supporters" rallying nearby, Keith Brunner of the Vermont Workers' Center, the organization that coordinates the state-wide "Health Care Is A Human Right" campaign, told *Common Dreams* over the phone.



**Jonathan Leavitt**

@JCL\_VT

08 Jan

The occupation of the Vermont House Chamber has begun demanding legislature enact Act 48 [#healthcareisahumanright](#) [#timeisnow](#) [#vtpoli](#) [#1u](#) [#p2](#)



**Jonathan Leavitt**

@JCL\_VT

Follow

Occupation of VT House Chamber with demand of legislature enacting Act48 Vt Statute establishing universal healthcare [pic.twitter.com/OzXRLfFRGI](http://pic.twitter.com/OzXRLfFRGI)

3:30 PM - 8 Jan 2015



23 15

"I am here because it is a human right to have health care," Skyler Wind, a member volunteer of the Vermont Workers' Center, told *Common Dreams* over the phone from the protest. "We all deserve to be treated the same way."

Wind explained she is a single mom living with disability, with a disabled child, in extreme poverty. "Too many poor people like myself, we're the ones whose teeth are falling out, whose cancers are discovered too late," she said. "Those like me, who are so-called 'welfare queens,' can't afford co-pays and have to mess around with medication. Why can't my son—why can't I—get care when we need it?"

Immediately preceding the occupation, nearly 200 protesters had filled the halls of the statehouse, singing, "We have come too far, we won't back down. We'll flood these halls with justice, the time is Now!"



Protesters flooded the Vermont statehouse on Thursday. (Photo courtesy of Jonathan Leavitt)

## "Respect Our Universal Health Care Law"

Act 48, which requires the full implementation of universal, publicly-funded health care in Vermont by 2017, has already suffered a series of delays since it was passed in 2011. The state legislature was set to decide on a financing plan for the bill in 2015, but in mid-December, Shumlin [announced](#) he would no longer move forward on the law, citing alleged economic reasons. "In my judgment, now is not the right time to ask our Legislature to take the step of passing a financial plan for Green Mountain Care," he said.

But it took Vermonters years to build a state-wide movement strong enough to pass Green Mountain Care, and grassroots organizations vow that they [refuse to acquiesce to this undemocratic decision](#), and in fact, will make their voices louder. The past few weeks have seen organizing drives, protest [letters](#), and even a symbolic mass [burning of medical bills](#) in front of the Vermont statehouse to illustrate exactly what's at stake in a state where poverty is [on the rise](#) and incomes are falling.

"The health care crisis and economic crisis that so many poor and working class people in Vermont are facing hasn't changed," said Brunner. "The governor, for his

own reasons, made the decision to throw in the towel. It was a political decision he framed as an economic decision. He is unwilling to have big businesses and wealthy individuals pay their fair share for health care."

An open letter delivered to state lawmakers earlier Thursday reads, "The Healthcare Is a Human Right Campaign asks all of our legislators to respect Act 48, our universal health care law, to review the governor's report on Green Mountain Care (GMC) financing, and to develop plans for moving forward with equitable, public financing. This process must happen in a transparent and participatory way, unlike the governor's discussions behind closed doors."

### **State-Wide Fight With Nation-Wide Relevance**

Nationwide, eyes are on the Vermont fight, which has inspired similar organizing drives, from [Maryland](#) to [Maine](#), to build popular movements, anchored in [human rights principles](#), to win publicly-funded, single-payer health care for all people, regardless of income or documented status. A [report](#) released last summer by the Commonwealth Fund found that the U.S. health care system is the most costly in the world yet provides the worst care of 11 industrialized nations, adding fuel to charges that the for-profit U.S. health system is failing.

More than 50 organizations from across the country, including Grassroots Global Justice Alliance and Jobs With Justice, signed an [open letter](#) which was released Thursday and declares, "Now is not the time to give up or give in. One decision shall not determine the fate of a right fought for by many. The people of Vermont can and will have the final say in how to establish and pay for a healthcare system that will serve all of their needs, rather than the profits of a few."

A [statement of solidarity](#) with Thursday's protest, from the Southern Maine Workers' Center, reads, "Growing movements of ordinary working and poor people in and beyond Vermont reject this canned narrative of scarcity, and instead embrace a politics of abundance. We insist there is enough for all of us to meet our basic needs. We believe that working collectively to ensure our human rights is the only way to build communities where we can all thrive."

Updates and commentary on Thursday's protest, which was still ongoing at the time of publication, are being posted to Twitter:

## #HealthCareIsAHumanRight



**Old Sauk River** @OldSaukRiver

19 Apr

#SinglePayerSunday #HR676 #HealthCareIsAHumanRight Urge your rep to support this bill: [washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/114...](http://washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/114...)

Retweeted by Henry Clay

Expand



**Old Sauk River** @OldSaukRiver

25 Apr

Yes @AetnaHelp #WethePeople #demand #singlepayer #hr676 #now Stop interfering with the delivery of #healthcare - #healthcareisahumanright

Retweeted by John R. Reigart III

Expand



**Old Sauk River** @OldSaukRiver

19 Apr

#SinglePayerSunday #HR676 #HealthCareIsAHumanRight Urge your rep to support this bill: [washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/114...](http://washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/114...)

Retweeted by lisa witham

Expand



**Old Sauk River** @OldSaukRiver

19 Apr

#SinglePayerSunday #HR676 #HealthCareIsAHumanRight Urge your rep to support this bill: [washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/114...](http://washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/114...)

Retweeted by aj

Expand



**Old Sauk River** @OldSaukRiver

19 Apr

#SinglePayerSunday #HR676 #HealthCareIsAHumanRight Urge your

Tweet #HealthCareIsAHumanRight

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 License

## Share This Article

110 828

## Related Articles



Insurance Companies Blatantly Ignore ACA's Free Birth Control Mandate



Denied! Powerful Industry Groups Get Setback in Effort to Keep Consumers in the Dark on GMOs



Scientists Warn of Possible Hormone Impacts From 'Safe Levels' of Ubiquitous Chemicals



Latest State-Level Attack on Reproductive Rights Takes Aim at Safe Medical Procedure

More in: [Economy](#), [Rights](#), [U.S.](#) , [Vermont](#), [Public Health](#), [Single Payer](#)

Our Spring Fundraiser is critical to our survival and time is running out!

**Donate Now!**

\$35,420 from 1,040 readers \$45k

## Sign Up for Newsletter

[Sign Up](#)

## Today's Views

Matt Taibbi



[Give 'Em Hell, Bernie...](#)



Deepak Bhargava  
[Putting Families First: Good Jobs for All](#)



John Nichols  
[Bernie Sanders Readies a 'Which Side Are You On?' Presidential Bid](#)



Faiza Patel  
[NSA Data Collection Program Must End](#)



Ben Lilliston  
[Corporate Cash vs The Rest of Us on Fast Track](#)



Ajamu Baraka  
[Baltimore and the Human Right to Resistance: Rejecting the Framework of the Oppressor](#)



Jim Naureckas  
['Why So Much Anger?': If You Don't Know, Washington Post Won't Tell You...](#)



Juan Cole  
[Iran Calls for Nuclear Disarmament by US, Israel, World](#)



Katrina vanden Heuvel  
[A Progressive's Lament about the Trans-Pacific Partnership](#)



Shepherd Bliss  
[Big Wine Fails to Dry Farm During California's Relentless Drought...](#)



Lindsay Koshgarian  
[National Defense Authorization Act: Five Things You Should Know](#)



Shaun La  
Police and 'Black Baltimore'...

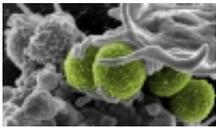
[➤ More Views](#)

## News That Matters

---



Two-Stepping Away from Bill's Legacy, Hillary Rebukes Era of Mass Incarceration



Nations Failing to Combat 'Global Threat' of Antibiotic-Resistant Superbugs: WHO



Fraud, Waste, and Lies: Charter Schools Cheating Communities Out of Millions of Dollars



Revealed: Canadian Government Trying to Buy First Nations Support for Tar Sands



Insurance Companies Blatantly Ignore ACA's Free Birth Control Mandate



Fight Over Domestic Spying Heats Up in Congress with 'USA Freedom Act'



'Expose the Slaveholders': Activists Disrupt For-Profit Prison Corp. Meeting



Campaign Against Glyphosate Steps Up in Latin America

It's On: Bernie Sanders to Announce Bid for Presidency on Thursday



'Structural Looting' of Black Communities Driving Protesters to Baltimore Streets

## Further

---

Framed In Fantasies: The Fall of Saigon and All That Came Before



This week marks 40 years since the fall of Saigon, that "quintessential bitter end" to a war whose current retelling - through "soft lies, willful amnesia, and rampant revisionism" - increasingly transforms a brutal American imperial misadventure into something more noble and less ghastly than it ever was. With the ghosts of Iraq and Afghanistan all around us, those who endured the Vietnam War are resolved to set the grievous record straight.

[Read More...](#)

[➤ More Further](#)

Connect With Us



---

## About Common Dreams

Our Mission:

To inform. To inspire.

To ignite change for the common good.

Common Dreams has been providing breaking news & views for the progressive community since 1997. We are independent, non-profit, advertising-free and 100% reader supported.

- [About Common Dreams](#)
- [Key Staff](#)
- [Writers' Guidelines](#)
- [The Commons - Community Guidelines](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)

## Contact Us

📍 Common Dreams  
P.O. Box 443  
Portland, ME 04112-0443  
USA

✉ via Email:

- [Editor](#)
- [News Tips?](#)
- [Article Submissions](#)
- [News Release Submissions](#)
- [Webmaster](#)

☎ 207.775.0488 (voice)  
207.775.0489 (fax)

**Common Dreams brings you the news that matters.**

**DONATE**

**Sign up for Newsletter**

**Click to Sign Up**

**Connect With Us**

