The Health Care Is a Human Right Movement

Lessons from the Vermont Model

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May 2014

The Vermont Breakthrough

After years of organizing by the Healthcare Is a Human Right Campaign, Vermont is now the first U.S. state…

✓ with a law for universal, publicly financed health care

✓ with human right to health care principles in law

✓ with a commitment to providing health care as a public good

✓ with a broad-based human rights movement for economic & social rights

Organizing with Human Rights

❑ People-centered

❑ Leadership of those most impacted

❑ Unifying

❑ Consciousness-raising

❑ Empowering

Vermont

Advocacy with Human Rights

- ❑ Leading with principles

- ❑ Envisioning a just world

- ❑ Identifying root causes

- ❑ Moving from defensive to proactive demands

- ❑ Shifting the debate

- ❑ Changing policy priorities

- ❑ Developing political agency

Vermont

Green Mountain Care

The state will create Green Mountain Care
"to provide, as a public good, comprehensive, affordable, high-quality, publicly financed health care coverage for all Vermont residents in a seamless and equitable manner regardless of income, assets, health status, or availability of health coverage."

➡️ **public good, universality, equity**

The state will *"achieve health care reform through the coordinated efforts of an independent board, state government, and the citizens of Vermont, with input from health care professionals, businesses, and members of the public."*

➡️ **accountability, transparency, participation**

Vermont

UNIVERSALITY
Everyone is included and can meet their needs

EQUITY
Everyone contributes what they can and gets what they need

TRANSPARENCY
All information related to decision-making should be clear and accessible to all

ACCOUNTABILITY
The people are able to oversee and guide how government is protecting and fulfilling our rights

PARTICIPATION
Everyone has a meaningful say in how decisions that impact us all get made

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Principled Wins

- **Universality:** everyone will be included, regardless of immigration status

- **Equity:** financing plan must be consistent with principle of equity

- **Accountability & Transparency:** human rights principles are in the law

- **Participation:** process for public input into decision-making

- **Public good:** health care provided as a public good

Vermont

Key Lessons from the Vermont Model

➢ identify people's **needs** and elevate the voices of the crisis
➢ claim **rights** and recognize government **obligations**
➢ support people's **agency** in effecting political change
➢ foster **unity** across issues and communities
➢ start changing **power** relations

Vermont

Beyond Vermont: Spreading the Model

Campaigns in Maryland, Maine, Pennsylvania:

❑ Reach broad constituencies and grow base

❑ Build and sustain collective engagement and leadership

❑ Build unity and alignment (across constituencies and issues)

❑ Raise expectations (consciousness)

❑ Build power

The Health Care Domino Theory

❑ Develop rights-based organizing model

❑ Win state-level victory

❑ Support replication/adaptation of model

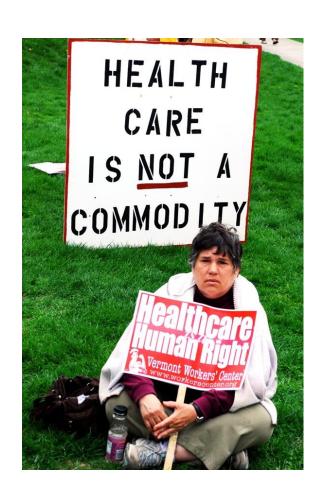❑ Build network & catalyze national movement

❑ Win in a critical mass of states

→ Change federal policy

Spreading the Model

Right to Health Care as a Lever for Social Change

Rights-based system analysis:

- ❑ Universal provision of a needed service

- ❑ Recognition of failures of market economy

- ❑ Economic & social rights as public goods

- ❑ Equity in access and financing

- ❑ Redistribution of resources and power

Rights-based response to health care crisis:

❑ transcends class, race, gender

❑ yet recognizes differential impact of commodified health system (health inequities)

❑ situates inequities within existing structures of power

❑ emphasizes participation and empowerment

❑ fosters cross-constituency unity

Social Change

The Transformational Power of Value-Based Campaigns

❑ Value-based: health care advocacy as a struggle to put people's needs & rights over technocratic or corporate interests.

❑ Consciousness-raising: people analyze their position and power in the health care system and in society as a whole.

❑ Collectivity beyond self-interest: from interest group actions to a broader struggle based on shared values.

❑ Transformational: from advocacy for a specific policy to a struggle for a bigger, unifying vision, guided by principles.

Social Change

From Health Care to Economic Justice

Human rights…

❑ Link root causes of rights violations to vision for structural change

❑ Uncover both universal system failures and inequitable impacts

❑ Support inclusion while pursuing transformation

❑ Foster alignment across communities, along with leadership of most impacted

Social Change

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