

Claudia Lennhoff: Women's March C-U

Champaign County Health Care Consumers is a non-profit, non-partisan consumer health advocacy organization.

We fight for health care as a basic human right.

We are so happy to join you today – to be part of the millions of people around the country marching in solidarity; demonstrating a commitment to unite and fight for women's rights, for justice, for the greater good.

I am here to ask you to make the fight for health care a top priority, an ongoing priority, even as we face many different struggles ahead.

I am here to ask you to engage in the work of participatory democracy – to know that our participation doesn't begin and end in the voting booth, but requires us to work and be engaged at all times. Especially when so much is at stake.

All of us are facing the fight of our lives as the new GOP dominated Congress and Administration seek to repeal and dismantle the Affordable Care Act. (ACA = "Obamacare")

Repeal of the ACA will affect all of us – whether we are young or old; whether we have health insurance from our employers, the Marketplace, Medicare, or Medicaid; whether we are disabled or not.

I will talk more about the ACA in a moment, but I want to say that while the repeal of the ACA will have a disproportionate impact on women and people with disabilities, the new GOP dominated Congress and Administration are targeting women and LGBTQ individuals in much more specific ways, seeking to strip us of our reproductive and sexual health care rights and access to care. They have put a bull's eye on Planned Parenthood – seeking to defund it and shut down clinics.

Women's ability to control our reproductive health is fundamental to our ability to live our lives, yet the GOP is working to pass laws to enforce pregnancy and restrict choice and sexuality, even as they are also undermining women's ability to have healthy pregnancies and healthy children. From a health policy perspective, it makes no sense.

But of course, this isn't about common sense health policy.

The efforts to dismantle the Affordable Care Act are already under way. But the fight is not over by any means! There is still hope!

So, let's talk about what we're fighting for:

Thanks to the ACA, we have the lowest uninsured rate in our nation's history. More people than ever before have health insurance.

And health insurance saves lives. It is a well established and documented fact that people who don't have health insurance die younger. They live sicker and they suffer more, and they die earlier from preventable and treatable diseases.

Now with the possible repeal of the ACA, over 20 million people may lose their health insurance.

More than 130 million of us with pre-existing conditions could face discrimination by insurance companies once again, with coverage being denied or priced out of our reach – even with employer based health insurance.

Being a woman would once again become a pre-existing condition.

Anyone with private insurance, whether from our employers or the Marketplace could lose the protections of the ACA that ban insurance companies from placing annual or lifetime financial caps on what they'll pay for your care, and we could lose the protection of having a defined out of pocket maximum each year.

There are many more details I could share with you, but you get the picture.

The fact is that we never know what life will throw at us.

Illness, injury, and disability are all too often the luck of the draw.

But it shouldn't be a matter of luck to have health insurance.

Everyone deserves a fair shot at being able to deal with whatever health-related luck comes to their way.

And that is why health insurance is so important, and why this moment in time when we are fighting to protect the ACA, is so important and so enormous.

And we can fight! There are things that every single one of us can do, and that we can teach others to do. Right now, the single most important thing that anyone can do is to call or visit your Congressional Representative.

Here in the 13th Congressional District, our Representative is Rodney Davis.

Tell your Representative that you don't want the ACA repealed without an immediate replacement that provides the same or better coverage.

Health Care Consumers has purple handouts that tell you exactly how to do that and we ask you to join us in these efforts.

Learn to make those calls, and keep calling, so they know you are paying attention!

Also, there are other folks here today from Action for a Better Tomorrow – the ones with the pink heart-shaped balloons – who have postcards to Representative Davis that you can sign and send in.

I'm not naïve. These are dark times.

But as Eleanor Roosevelt said, "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

I feel hopeful. I am here with you all, and today, here, this is where hope lives and the light shines. – it lives with you, with us. We have lit that candle.

I want us to be bold and determined and courageous in these struggles.

I want us to be audacious and fierce and confident, and most of all, I want us to do the hard sustained work that it will take. We must not and cannot lose this fight – too many lives depend on it.

I want us to be like Muhammad Ali when someone was thinking about fighting him – and he said, "If you even dream about beating me, you better wake up and apologize."

This fight is a collective struggle. But whatever it takes, we have to fight, we have to keep working. It takes all of us. It is okay to get tired, but not to give up. Never give up.

Molly Ivins said, "So keep fightin' for freedom and justice, beloveds, but don't you forget to have fun doin' it. Lord, let your laughter ring forth. Be outrageous, ridicule

the fraidy-cats, rejoice in all the oddities that freedom can produce. And when you get through kickin' ass and celebratin' the sheer joy of a good fight, be sure to tell those who come after how much fun it was."

Thanks for making it fun, y'all. Let's do the work, and we'll get where we need to go.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Effort to save Champaign County Nursing Home. Ballot referenda for April 4, 2017 Local Elections will include two questions for the Champaign County Nursing Home. The first one is about selling or disposing of the CCNH and we are urging Vote No on this one. The second one is about raising a property tax levy to support the CCNH and we are urging Vote Yes on this one. There is a table outside with more information. Thank you!