



Sample Speech

Place responsibility for solving the problem with citizens collectively. Trigger innovation and problem-solving.

California is like no other place in the country. We are the birthplace of new ideas. We are willing to be innovative and unafraid of tackling an old problem in a new way. Maybe it is because we are such a large state that problems tend to arise in California first. And maybe our ingenuity can be explained by the old adage “necessity is the mother of invention.” Well, I’m here to suggest to you that it is time for us to focus California’s spirit of innovation on solving a problem that has gone on far too long. Our healthcare system is at a crossroads when it comes to assuring quality, affordable healthcare for all the citizens of California. We can solve this problem, but only if we are willing to take a hard look at the weaknesses in the current system.

Describe health care coverage as a system.

Over the course of our nation’s history, we have built a series of modern networks that are essential to our economy and our quality of life – electrical power grids, phone systems, water systems, interstate highways, and the Internet to name a few. But with health coverage we’re stuck in the 1940s, because we have never begun building any modern infrastructure for health coverage. Instead, we rely on a hit-or-miss, inefficient and unreliable approach which leaves many without coverage. We have the equivalent of scattered wells, individual generators, and county roads but no Health Coverage Infrastructure we can rely on, no systems for making sure that people have health coverage.

Use social math to explain the scope of the problem.

In fact, we know that 6.7 million Californians find themselves shut out of the system. That’s close to one in every five Californians – a group equal in size to the combined populations of our three largest cities (Los Angeles, San Diego and San Jose), with most of San Francisco thrown in as well. Put another way, this is like having a north-south freeway system designed for all Californians that dead ends above L.A. -- leaving everything below it completely off the map!

Use a Simplifying Model to connect the insured and uninsured in one system. Define the problem as instability.

This affects us all, because the high number of uninsured puts the health care system under significant stress. Think of the state's health coverage system as a structure held up by supporting pillars. Insured people are like the pillars that hold up the health care system, by paying in, whether a little or a lot, for their care. People without insurance still use the Health Care System, but they are

the missing pillars because they are not paying in regularly, and not helping to support the system. These millions of missing pillars are threatening the stability of the health care system and increasing the costs for those who remain in the system. We won't be able to get a handle on the increasing cost of healthcare until we address the uninsured.

Discuss situations that lead to being uninsured, not the individuals who are uninsured.

Take a moment to think about how common it is to be without health insurance. There are any number of situations in which we can find ourselves where health care coverage is unavailable: small businesses that cannot afford to provide coverage, young adults starting their first job, people who are newly separated or divorced, those who would like to retire early, those who employer does provide it and they cannot afford to purchase it on their own – the list goes on. These gaps are making the health coverage system unstable. We need to find ways to bring everyone in to share the costs and benefits of the health care system.

Explain the concept of prevention and link it to cost inefficiency.

We all know what happens when a person is without health coverage. You pray that no one in your family gets sick. When you do feel sick, you self-medicate with over-the-counter products and hope that the problem will go away. If the symptoms worsen, and you can't ignore it any longer, you end up in the emergency room. This isn't healthcare. It's catastrophic care. An ER doctor told me that one of every three patients he sees is uninsured. Health problems that could've been addressed easily and inexpensively turn into serious health problems that cost serious dollars. Since there is no insurance coverage to pay the bill, the cost gets passed on to the rest of us. Finding ways to bring everyone in to share the costs and benefits of the healthcare system is the cost-effective thing to do and the moral thing to do.

Introduce step-by-step planning.

We don't have to fix all the problems at once. But we need to get started with small but meaningful steps that will stabilize the system for us all. Otherwise, things are likely to get worse.

Emphasize situations that lead to uninsurance,

California relies upon small businesses, and small businesses have been under particular pressure from rising health care costs. I've talked with at least a dozen small business owners who have always provided health insurance to their employees, but now worry that they won't be able to do so much longer. The owner of a local auto shop told me he is the last mechanic in town to provide healthcare to his employees. He's torn between providing insurance for his employees and remaining cost competitive. If he is forced out of the health coverage system, that's another missing pillar that results in more instability to the system and a greater weight on the rest of us. We need to find ways to level the playing field and help small business owners provide for their employees.

*Emphasize situations.
Reinforce common*

We all know people who are hard-working, frequently holding down two jobs, but their employer doesn't provide health insurance and they have no way to afford costly insurance on their own. Why wouldn't we allow these people to buy into the state insurance system on a sliding scale? It's simple common sense. There are all sorts of common sense steps like this that we can take now to stabilize the system, but we need to get to work.

C.E. Stowe provides us with a wonderful definition of "common sense."
"Common sense is the knack of seeing things as they are, and doing things as they ought to be done."

*Reinforce responsible
management and*

It's time for us to take a hard look at our health coverage system, and begin to shape it into what it ought to be. Dealing with this challenge, rather than letting it get worse, is the responsible thing to do. It's what we teach our kids, and it's how we try to handle problems in our day-to-day lives. You don't ignore a problem, you figure out a plan for addressing it and you take it one step at a time. It's time to get started now.