

Obama, Nancy, and the Health Care Reform Bill. The View from the Italian-American Community on Facebook.

Ottorino Cappelli (March 23, 2010)



In the night of March 21, as soon as the House passed the Health Care Reform Bill, we launched a discussion among our readers on Facebook. "Whatever your opinion on the matter," we emphasized, "it shouldn't escape notice that this historic event takes place in large part thanks to the joint effort of the first African-American President and the first Italian-American Woman Speaker of the House." About hundred people participated in the first 24 hours. This is what they had to say

We organized our discussion as follows: first, we posted the news: "10:45pm The House has just passed the Health Reform Bill." During the night, 27 people sent an approval message (by clicking the "I like it" button,) and 17 people posted a comment. A few hours later, we invited a number of "public intellectuals"



—

including university professors, journalists, and artists

—

to express their views in a little more articulated fashion. Six responded in the first 24 hours, and we posted their opinions on our wall. The discussion took off immediately among the almost 6,000 "fans" of our Facebook page: They wrote, sometimes taking issue with each other and "yelling" in capital letters

; some just expressed agreement or disagreement with someone else's position, while others explained their views at more length. We present the whole exchange here as it appeared on Facebook today, March 23, at 10am.

As for the actual content of the exchange, you will notice that while all our contributors who responded in the first hours happened to be in favor of the reform bill, critical comments seem to prevail among the readership. Also notice, however, that up to now 33 readers have posted a comment, and among them you find indeed several critical voices; on the other hand, as many as 49 people have "approved" the pro-reform posts we published by just clicking the "I like it" button. One should conclude that had the latter also taken their time to write a few lines, pro-reform comments would be in the majority.

Be it as it may, the discussion is still open to all those who want to participate. Just come and visit us at www.facebook.com/iitaly [2].

Anthony J. Tamburri, Dean, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute (Queens College, CUNY)

"Symbolically, this speaks to the value and necessity of inter-ethnic collegiality, collaboration, and cohesion. Be it something as colossal as universal health care, as we witnessed this evening, or something more local as the movement to prevent the demolition of Our Lady of Loreto Church in Brooklyn, where the neighborhood African Americans have now joined the Italian Americans, when we gather our energies and forces, things can indeed get done. Patrick Gallo was correct to call for this cohesion back in 1974! In the end, however, let us remember that there is still much more for us to get done."

[Daniela Marianna C](#) [3]

fb does not allow me to fully write how i feel about this new bill. i feel we are a nation that works on



survival of the fittest. my father came into this country over 20 yrs ago found a union job to make sure he and his family would be taken care of. i look for jobs that has health care offered. and my grandmother who is 89 yrs old finds it funny how ppl who do not work will get the same privelages as ppl who work. i already know private small companies who are talking about cutting their staff to 49 ppl so they won't get charged with the fine. we are a nation does not follow other nations, we always set the bar for other nations. I do not care what Canada or the eu is doing. we are america and we always revolutionize stituations. we can do so much better than this. 3 yrs of obama can't wait.

[Teresa Corrao](#) [4]

I totally agree with you Daniella and the other people who are praising Pelosi for being an italian-american clearly lost the gist of it all. I am far from being proud of her bullying tactic and for placing her political agenda before the welfare of the people. Her abuse of power is appalling. [Adriana Marie Tilson](#) [5]

To Daniela & Teresa, I am in total agreement! My dad worked for social service over 30 years, & the fraud was outlandish. But now that he is in assisted living & his income is just a little too high to qualify for assistance he is practically broke. I too, am baffled & pissed off that people who did not contribute get even more care & assistance than my Father!

[Ginamarie Guarna](#) [6]

@ teresa c. --i totally agree with you. she is all about quotes and photo-ops!! just because she is italian doesn't mean she gets a free pass with me!!

[George De Stefano](#) [7]

Abuse of power by Pelosi? What are you idiots talking about? It's called leadership. It's called voting. Were you in a coma during the past 8 years of Bush-Cheney? The abuses of power during those years were outrageous but I bet none of you right-wing cretini were complaining then, were you?

[George De Stefano](#) [7]

And for your information, Marianna, people in Canada are better off than we are. FACT. They wouldn't trade their system for the disastrous one we have, with 40+ million lacking any coverage at all. It's amazing how brainwashed you knee-jerk conservatives are.

[Jim DiGiacomo](#) [8]

WHAT ABOUT RATIONING! YOU NEED TO WAIT FOR CARE IF YOU ARE OLDER. BY THE TIME YOU GET TO SEE A DCOTOR YOU MAY AS WELL FORGET ABOUT IT. YOU ARE DEAD. HOW COME CANANDIAN RESIDENTS COME TO THE USA TO GET CARE! ANSWER THAT ONE!

i WOULD LOVE TO DEBATE THESE CREEPS WE HAVE IN CONGRESS! A BUNCH OF SPENDERS WITH NO WAY TO PAY.

OUR COUNTRY IS GOING MORE SOCIALIST AND WILL END UP LOOKING LIKE EUROPE WITH HIGH TAX'S, HIGH ENEMPLOYMNET, AND HIGH INFLATION ALONG WITH LARGE BUDGET DEFECITS STARTED UNDER BUSH AND COMPANY. WHAT WE NEED IS TO GET OUR SPENDING POLICIES IN LINE WITH WHAT WE SPEND, RECESSION OR NO RECESSION.

[Dina Michetti Somers](#) [9]

I am Canadian and have yet to ever go to the states for ANY healthcare whatsoever. Neither has my family or anyone I know for that matter. Our Provincial Health Insurance Plan has taken care of all our needs from run of the mill xrays to more compilcated MRIs. My Mom just spent close to 3 months in the hospital and had every test imaginable done ... and surgery. There is no bill to pay. Can you say that right now that would happen to you? If you have a doctor that doesn't care or can't be bothered you may end up going stateside but there is everything available here that we need. If you feel the need for cosmetic surgery you may want to go the states because that is not covered in alot of cases but if it is from a birth defect or an accident, it IS covered and I know that firsthand after being in a gas explosion I needed facial cosmetic surgery...again...no bill when I left. The bill is here....it has passed...make the best of it!

[Lorraine Langione Civitanova](#) [10]

Not a place in the world that can compare to the highly skilled doctors and quality health care that is afforded to all our citizens and non-citizens. Every day people risk their lives to get to our shores. Don't hear them banging down doors to get into Canada!

[Dina Michetti Somers](#) [9]

Quality health care.....only if you can afford it.....is sad.....



Aileen Riotto Sirey, Chair and Founder, National Organization of Italian American Women

"For all the passion and vituperation surrounding it, "healthcare" is largely an issue about family nurturing. It is therefore remarkably appropriate that the Speaker who broke the long stalemate by ushering the Healthcare Bill through the House was not only the first woman to hold that position...but an Italian American woman.

While the efficacy of the bill has yet to be proven, it is a start. Nancy Pelosi did what came naturally to her by embracing the American family, with special compassion for disenfranchised children, young adults and poor Americans.

Speaker Pelosi has been a lightning rod in part because of her position but in large measure because she is a woman and an Italian American."

[Carolina Gengo Di Domenico](#) [11]

Well stated Aileen!

[Anthony Crispino Sr.](#) [12]

Yes thanks to the first Italian American woman Speaker for the bigger whole she has put us in, get ready for more taxes and more medicaid mess. We need reform but this was to the extreme.

[Eluisa Infelise Lynn](#) [13]

Historically this is amazing...it goes to show that to get things done it takes an Italian woman. However, I remain skeptical about this reform..it will remain to be seen, as far as I see its just another way to make us taxpayers dish out more money and an incentive for the beneficiaries of the plan to continue to do nothing..I'm all in favor of helping the seniors, the sick, and few temporarily down on their luck..its the lifelong beneficiaries that make me angry.

[Adriana Marie Tilson](#) [5]

I'm with Anthony on this issue.

[Crystal Ainardi](#) [14]

I must be in the minority in this on the comments here. I'm proud America finally caught up with the rest of the world on a health care system that thinks of the majority of its people. And even so, its still a designed health care system fit for America its not like any of the others.

[Daniela Marianna C](#) [3]

i am with anthony on this one. i don't think as a whole we are against everyone having health care, it is how the government is going about it. we the middle class are sick and tired of paying for everyone else!

[Joe Casalaina](#) [15] This shows that even among Italian-Americans there are still ignorance and bigotry. Anthony,Adriana,Daniela who do you think currently pays for the uninsured? In many states, it is the law and in all states medical ethics dictates that anyone who goes to the emergency room gets treated. Who pays for that treatment is the taxpayers and insured in higher rates. Have ever see an hospital bill? Enormous charges to recover non-insurance. With this law at least most uninsured will be forced to get insurance and those that have been denied insurance because of pre-existing conditions will be able to buy. Just this if done right will reduce expenses for the hospitals. This bill is not the answer but it is a start. [Alfred Guerra](#) [16]

I am with anthony on this also, Think about all the illegal immigrants now, that will have better healthcare coverage than the working person. Who pays for this us the working guy, we need change but this isn't the change we need. We need to vote out all who passed this bill.

[George De Stefano](#) [7]

"even among Italian-Americans there are still ignorance and bigotry"

"Even"? You haven't been paying much attention-- there's plenty of both among IAs, sad to say. Guerra, for example, reiterates the discredited GOP bullshit about "illegal immigrants." Better healthcare than the "working person" -- what planet are you from? Where'd you get this great insight from -- Glenn Beck? Other comments blame "the government" when this moderate, centrist plan is



the first time the US government has taken any steps to rein in the real culprits -- the insurance companies. The US is the ONLY advanced industrial Western society not to provide or guarantee universal health coverage to its citizens. The ONLY one! Finally some movement is made towards this important goal and we get the usual ignorant, selfish, bigoted whining of the Italian American reactionaries (to accompany the same from reactionaries of all kinds). Vaffanculo!

[Alfred Guerra](#) [16]

Only time will tell I guess they took away 500 million from medicare to pay for this bill. De stefano don't kid yourself this is not about democrats vs republicans or being united for Italian americans. This is about the american way of living. My parents came here from Italy and worked for a living and got jobs or joined unions that provide for health care. That bill did nothing to forcing insurance companies to lowering they rates. Ask your self one question If this bill was such a great bill why was it such a struggle to pass it even 34 democrats voted No for it.

[Jim DiGiacomo](#) [8]

I agree with Anthony Crsipano.

[Adriana Marie Tilson](#) [5]

To Mr.Casalaina, I am neither ignorant nor a bigot...& I know who pays, it's the middle class who always seem to get screwed one way or another! Yes,I've seen plenty of medical bills piling up for my Dad, who worked all his life just to give it all to a nursing home & assisted living! I hope you are right about the uninsured, but aren't they uninsured because of lack of money in the first place? What a frickin vicious circle!!!!

Judith Harris, Journalist, Correspondent from Rome

"Because I live in Italy, where a national health service is taken for granted (and sometimes too much for granted!), I have learned to know personally and appreciate its benefits, especially for small children and the elderly. Throughout this campaign in the US I have particularly resented the opposition's disdainful insistence that a national health service is "socialism." One can only be proud that the leadership of Nancy Pelosi contributed so vitally to passage of the bill.

At the same time, this comment by the NARAL organization also struck me: "It is an outrage that anti-choice politicians such as Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Mich.) and Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) used women's reproductive health as a bargaining chip."

[Mary Jane Cryan](#) [17]

I'm with Judy on this... eventho' I dont know how the US bill relates to the reality of our health care here in Italy. I remember how surprised my elderly aunt was when she needed X rays for an injury sustained in St. Peter's Square and how well taken care of she was... eventho' she was only a visitor. When a similar thing happened to my daughter visiting in USA she was told to put ice on her broken nose and hope for the best ... no way they would admit her to the emergency room since she had no coverage in the States!

[Rosemary Della Ratta](#) [18]

OMG Ugh

[Margherita Santoro](#) [19]

I'm with Judy on this too.... the Health care in US is very bed...in Canada we get the best health service i'm so furtunate to live in Canada.

[Cathy Vento Shaw](#) [20]

MARGHERITA, YOUR CONGRESSMAN DAVIS DIDN'T THINK SO, THAT'S WHY HE FLEW TO CALIFORNIA TO HAVE A HEART PROCEDURE... AND DON'T FEEL BAD, HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE, MANY WORLD LEADERS FLY TO AMERICA TO HAVE THEIR LIVES SAVED...

GOD BLESS AMERICA... THE GREATEST RICHEST HEALTHIEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

IN NOVEMBER, WHEN THE COMMUNISTS ARE VOTED OUT OF OFFICE, THIS BILL WILL BE REVERSED...



CIAO

Jerome Krase, Emeritus Professor, Brooklyn College (CUNY)

When I asked my wife Suzanne for comment on Nancy Pelosi's "victory," she said "Go girl!." Having been surrounded virtually all my adult life by Italian American women I was certain that only someone like Nancy Pelosi could get the job done in our dysfunctional legislative family dominated by males with government paid expensive health care.

For example, in my wife's all Italian American family, as well as my own half-Sicilian one, the women were the "generals" whose untiring efforts and constant strategizing led the family through thick and thin. My wife and daughters have been pushing for health care reform for ages (preferring a single payer system but will take almost anything at this point).

As I wrote some time ago in my i-italy article "[Nancy for President and Other Proposals](#) [21]":

"Nancy Pelosi; Italian American, bright, beautiful, articulately liberal Democrat who has the courage to go head to head with both enemies and friends to do the best for her country...If I weren't already married to a similarly endowed woman, I'd be chasing her all over the place. Since I can't propose marriage, I will simply propose Nancy Pelosi for President."

[Andrew Guzaldo](#) [22]

Health Care reform, passed yesterday, will not be anything that the Dems have said. It is unfortunate this has come to this stature, of larger government, and mandates to the Citizens of this unique nation...

The founding fathers of this Country, as well as the Italian Scholars that were involved, in the constitution, will be turning over in their graves!!

[Christina Marrocco Gilleran](#) [23]

I disagree with Andrew. Completely.

[Rosemary Della Ratta](#) [18]

I agree with Andrew

[Jim DiGiacomo](#) [8]

YEH NANCY IS A BEAUTY, BUT UNFORTUNATELY HER ACTION WILL COST THE USA A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY! WHEN THE AMOUNTS ARE TALLIED DOWN THE LINE, THERE WILL BE A LARGE LOSS OF JOBS, HIGHER DEFICITS. GET WITH IT PROFESSOR, WE NEED DEFICIT REDUCTION, LESS TAXES TO MAKE THIS COUNTRY A BETTER PLACE FOR MY CHILDREN. PELOSI IS RUINING THINGS ALONG WITH OBAMA'S TEAM FROM CHICAGO!

[Carlo Lipizzi](#) [24]

1/3 of US population is uninsured/underinsured. People stay in jobs because afraid of losing their benefits. People with pre existing conditions have no coverage whatsoever in many states.

A change is long due.

Problem is the out of the world cost of the whole health care system. From this week Crain's NY I read top surgeons with over \$18 million in compensation (Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center), 25 MDs over \$1.6 million in NY only.



Who you think is paying for that?

Health care in this country is the most expensive in the world. Public health care today (for what it is) is by itself the most expensive in the world. Combination of public and private, makes our system 2 times more expensive than the second in the rank.

Point is, there is no Administration "strong" enough to go to the health care stakeholders (MDs, but even more insurances, lawyers, hospitals, big pharma companies, medical devices makers) and tell them: you need to get far less money.

Bottom line, we are having a great social improvement with this reform, not sure we can really effort the current ultra expensive system, extended to larger population.

But we have to try, even if we are far from addressing the core problem (the high costs of the system).

[Sandro Lamberti](#) [25]

@ Jim and Andrew, I'm sorry you two are feeling this way and ignoring the facts. This bill only hurts insurance companies

Thanks to last night's vote, that child who has had asthma since birth will now be covered after suffering for her first nine years as an American child with a pre-existing condition.

Thanks to last night's vote, that 23-year-old of who will be hit one day by a drunk driver and spend six months recovering in the hospital will now not go bankrupt because their parents will be able to keep him on their insurance policy.

Thanks to last night's vote, when cancer returns for the third time -- racking up another \$200,000 in costs to keep that person alive -- every insurance company will have to commit a criminal act if they even think of dropping you from their rolls.

Even though you have opposed this health care bill, we've made sure it is going to cover you, too, in your time of need. I know you're upset right now. I know you probably think that if you did get wiped out by an illness, or thrown out of your home because of a medical bankruptcy, that you would somehow pull yourself up by your bootstraps and survive. I know that's a comforting story to tell yourself, and if John Wayne were still alive I'm sure he could make that into a movie for you.

But the reality is that these health insurance companies have only one mission: To take as much money from you as they can -- and then work like demons to deny you whatever coverage and help they can should you get sick.

So, when you find yourself suddenly broadsided by a life-threatening illness someday, perhaps you'll thank Nancy Pelosi and those pinko-socialist, Canadian-loving Democrats and independents for what they did Sunday evening.

May you always have the best of health.

[Jim DiGiacomo](#) [8] Sandro, you cover a lot of key points, however, the cost of care is going to go up dramitiaccly due to no cap on benefits, and and preexising conditions. Two years ago my wife was sick and I lost my job. Insurance covered my wife and when I received new insurance, we were covered. however you need to look at "how much will the cost increase" with these new mandates. It sounds good on paper, but the truth is that we will pay much more! There is no thing as a free lunch



in this country. We need to seek common ground as I am scared that I will have to decide H/I, food on the table, or my girls education! I have built up a cushion, only to see the good ole libeals take it away.

... Also, we need jobs in this country and this law will only hurt job growth. [Alfred Guerra](#) [16]
From what i am reading this bill does absolutely nothing to lowering your insurance cost it can only go up with all the regulations to it.

[George Fernandez](#) [26]

Democrats seems obsessed with passing any legislation for the sake of showing its own political prowess. At this juncture the only ones that lose are the voters. We may suffer in the future due to escalating medical costs because of unintentional or deliberate miscalculations now, or simply because the crafters of this legislation have been misled by the lobbyists favoring this option. This potential loss is monetary, while the real loss is from the giving of our own freedom to chose. The Declaration guarantees each of us the right of "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", but it does not guarantee that life will be trouble free, nor our longevity free of health problems or financial difficulty. Yet, with this legislation we the people give up some of that guaranteed freedom and curse future generations to pay for our own selfishness.

While I personally hope that this legislation fails, because I believe it will prove a detriment to society in general by over taxing the middle class (bread & butter of America I might add), I would hope that these very brave legislators would continue the debate and fashion real substantive legislation which will allow the uninsured among us the opportunity to protect themselves from catastrophic loss due to illness or injury without bartering our children's and grandchildren's future for our own immediate gain....

Annie Rachele Lanzillotto, Artist, New York City

Pelosi has a name like a pugilist, and she hammered home the law. You see the size of that hammer?! Now we will have more options for survival when faced with illness rather than ducking under the poverty line with our pre-pre-pre-existings.

Maybe just maybe us dual citizens can survive in this country. We shall see.

As a double cancer survivor, my whole economic life focuses around accessing top health care. As an Italian American woman I have been tough enough to survive despite the constant circumlocution of health insurance. I'm not afraid to be poor. That courage is part of my make-up. Afraid to be uninsured? Certo!

[Madeline DeMuccio](#) [27]

God Bless you!! I stand with you!!!

[Walter Alberghini](#) [28]

BRAVA !!!!!!!

[Lorraine Langione Civitanova](#) [10]

Worse thing that could have happened to us. WAKE-UP AMERICA, before it's too late!!!

[Nicholas Narducci](#) [29]

Agreed, Lorraine. I hate to say it, but I really believe the people who are in favor of this don't know how to do math. This legislation will greatly increase both the Federal deficit and debt. An army of IRS agents will have to be hired to enforce it, further eroding our freedoms. Don't kid yourselves folks: down the road our taxes will go up. Oh yes, it will take a lot longer to see your doctor and the quality of our healthcare will deteriorate.

Interestingly, while Dems are pushing this, in Europe they are slowly and quietly paring down their



national healthcare systems. Why? THEY CAN'T AFFORD IT ANY LONGER!

[Jim DiGiacomo](#) [8]

The Dems state that it will lower the deficit. When you take out the smoke and mirrors the deficit goes up \$500B+++

[Francesca Cerchia Pensa](#) [30]

Better to have the deficit go up while taking care of our citizens rather than have it go up to fund ridiculous wars. [Silvana Mastrolia](#) [31]

Amen!

[George Fernandez](#) [26]

Better to have the deficit go up funding "ridiculous wars" (secondo te) while they keep our enemies far away,,,than not to fund them and have the f... arabs in our back yard,,,

if so, would BO health plan be of any help to you?....it does not make no sense to me,,, does it to you Francesca? pensa un po' [Silvana Mastrolia](#) [31]

Yes, better to have strong, empowered citizens than fabricated wars.

[George Fernandez](#) [26]

Yes Silvana, like the wolfs are vegetarians LOL [Cathy Vento Shaw](#) [20]

IF YOU THINK HEALTH CARE IS EXPENSIVE NOW, WAIT UNTIL IT'S FREE!!!!!!!

[Cecilia Difonso Cataldo](#) [32]

it will never be free ! nothing is free here in the USA pretty soon will be paying for the air we take in by cubic feet! and the capacity of our lungs!

[Francesca Cerchia Pensa](#) [30]

@George: We're talking about the USA where many of our residents are from other countries. It isn't helpful to stereo-type and to insult all Arabs as you did. The question should be...Why does the USA have so many enemies? The wars (secondo me) haven't accomplished much other than to create more enemies and to turn the surplus we had into the largest deficit in the history of the USA. To answer your question as to whether the health plan would help me I would tell you that I have very good health care coverage. It would, however, probably help many of my fellow citizens.

Edvige Giunta, Professor of English, New Jersey City University

Health care reform: like so many, I did not believe this was going to happen. I am elated to see politicians at work on behalf of the people.

This is the kind of momentous event I hoped to witness when I decided to become a US citizen. To be able to listen to our politicians and actually believe them: what a thrill! Obama is keeping his promises.

[Joseph Imparato](#) [33]

Politicians at work on behalf of the people????????????? This is NOBAMA take over of our health care system. This is not about health care it is about government control of our lives.

[Cathie Leask Marando](#) [34]

think of your own constitution ... which you all hold near and dear...all people created equal... etc... I agree with Edvige... power to the people they have spoke by way of your political system through the congressmen... and the people they represent... ALL people should have access to health care... not just rich people... who can afford it... thank GOD I'm Canadian... shame on you for having thirty plus million without health care... the richest land in the world... WOW... thank goodness for Obama... "for the people by the people..funny how you're not liking your constitution now EH?

[Anthony Crispino Sr.](#) [12]

They couldn't care less as to what people want, the polls showed that most people did not want reform to this ex-stream, but they shoved it down everyone's throat. When Obamam was running for office he talked about transparency in government and how all the health care talks and negotiations



would be available on you-tube as well as other sources for the people to follow, that never happened. There was so many back room deals made to get votes to go their way, what happened to transparency?

I, like so many other people know that something had to be done for health care but this is to the extream.

We will all be paying more taxes and premiums.

[Marco Sperti](#) [35]

Pensate alla mia offerta venitevene in Australia! The place to be for the italians now!

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