

What do you think about California Sen. Kamala Harris' health care plan, which would allow more people to opt into Medicare while also giving private insurers the chance to participate?

It raises a lot of questions for me, like why there's such a long phase-in to cover everybody, and why Sen. Harris seems insistent on preserving a role for the private insurance industry. One thing I think candidates haven't had to do so far is make a case for why private insurance companies are good, how they actually make life better for doctors or patients.

While Medicare for All is becoming a more mainstream idea, politically it remains a long shot, even in a state like California. In its absence, what other options would you support?

There are various incremental reforms that would still be important improvements over the status quo. And I am not sure that incremental reforms will be more politically viable than Medicare for All.

The insurance industry will oppose a public option just like they'll oppose single-payer. So, I guess I don't really accept the premise of the question. But, putting that aside, I support any solution that gets more people the health care they deserve.

About this story:

It is an abridged version of the original produced by Kaiser Health News, an editorially independent program of the Kaiser Family Foundation.

How are Rachael and your son, Carl?

Rachael is enjoying teaching and looking forward to having time off when the new baby comes in November. That's some news for your readers—she's pregnant with our second!

How are you doing physically, emotionally and mentally?

ALS is exhausting, infuriating and inserts itself into every moment of my life. I recently lost the ability to drive my wheelchair, so other people have to do it for me. But there are always glimmers of hope.

Very soon I will have access to eye-drive technology, which will allow me to drive my wheelchair with my eyes using my computer.

What does it feel like to see yourself, struggling with a debilitating disease, as one of the most prominent faces of the Medicare for All movement?

I am glad to be able to use my personal tragedy to support transformative change, although I would obviously give up all the attention and accolades in a heartbeat if I could be healthy. I'd much prefer to make impact the way I was before my diagnosis. □

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WEEKLY DOSE

Hike smart

A walk in the woods is a great way to get your steps in, but something as small as a bee sting or as painful as a broken ankle can suddenly turn your hike into a rescue mission. A total of 46,609 people required search and rescue aid in this country's national parks between 2004 and 2014, and according to research, wandering off trail, injury and bad weather are the main culprits. To prevent the worst from happening, take a few precautions before you head out. Whether it's a day hike or a backpacking trip, experts suggest always taking these 10 essentials: first-aid supplies, extra clothing for unexpected weather, food, water, fire, sun protection, a light source, tools for emergency repairs and a shelter. If you get lost, remember this simple acronym—S.T.O.P. Stop, think, observe and plan before you lose your cool. Happy trails!



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