



National Right-Wing "Astroturf" Groups Organize "Local" Anti-Health Care Protest

***ProgressNow Colorado calls attention to national usual suspects
hiding behind "local" effort***

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DENVER—As yet another right-wing protest to President Obama's agenda prepared to kick off in Denver, this time against reforming and expanding access to health care for all Americans, ProgressNow Colorado, the state's largest online progressive advocacy organization released the following statement:

"Once again, national right-wing attack groups are disingenuously trying to attack the President's health care reform agenda," said ProgressNow Colorado founder Michael Huttner. "Using deceptive language and hiding behind local front groups to create the appearance of 'grass-roots' anger, these out-of-state interests are misrepresenting both themselves and the citizens of Colorado who desperately need health care reform."

The protest being held today has been advertised as a 'grass-roots rally' organized by the local right-wing Independence Institute, but in their announcement is the rally's 'co-sponsor,' a relatively unknown group called Patients First.[1] Patients First is operated by the well-known national right-wing organization known as the Americans for Prosperity, the same organization involved in the planning of other right-wing "grassroots" protests in Denver—including February's anti-stimulus rallies, and the infamous "Tea Parties" held in April and July.[2]

"As you can see, this isn't even about health care," Huttner continued. "These are the same out-of-state right-wing millionaires who paid for the 'Tea Parties' and the 'anti-stimulus' protest in Denver last February. Their sole interest is in fomenting trouble for the President and his agenda, whatever the issue of the day may be. They are attempting to gain electoral advantage by bashing everything the President does, and scaring up local residents to create the false impression that their 'anger' is shared by the public. In fact, these Americans for Prosperity protests are timed to coincide with a national bus tour! They're about as 'grass-roots' as Kim Jong Il's last birthday party."

"ProgressNow Colorado calls on the organizers of today's 'protest' to disclose how much money and assistance they received from national attack groups, and to stop misrepresenting themselves as in any way reflecting the views of the people of Colorado," Huttner concluded. "It's a joke."

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[1] Independence Institute. *Rally Against Government Run Health Care - Denver*. Retrieved 7/28/2009.

[2] Americans for Prosperity. *July 4th Tea Party Rallies in Colorado*. Retrieved 7/28/2009.

Patients First?

The Reality of Americans for Prosperity's "grassroots" organization.

Patients First is a project of the organization Americans for Prosperity.¹ They purport to represent patients, but the evidence shows something entirely different.

Americans for Prosperity is a Corporate Astroturf Group. AFP's Chairman is David H. Koch, who with his brother Charles runs the largest private corporation in the United States, Koch Industries.^{2,3} Together, the brothers run the Koch Family Foundations, one of the largest single contributors to right-wing causes, including Americans for Prosperity. In 2008 alone, Koch Industries spent over \$20 million on lobbyists in Washington, DC alone.⁴

Americans for Prosperity's activities in addition to opposing health insurance reform include opposing anti-tobacco laws, denying the existence of global warming, opposing financial industry regulation, and sponsoring the so-called "tea parties."⁵

AFP's president, Tim Phillips, has a long resume of working for corrupt corporate lobbyists, including Enron and Jack Abramoff, with his former business partner Ralph Reed. In 1998, Phillips engineered the direct mail campaign for the sweatshop owners of Saipan, arguing to conservative Christians that "Chinese workers 'are exposed to the teachings of Jesus Christ' while on the islands, and many 'are converted to the Christian faith and return to China with Bibles in hand.'"⁶

Rhetoric vs. Reality

When corporate shells like Americans for Prosperity claim people don't want the government to fix healthcare, it flies in the face of reality. Poll after poll shows the vast majority of Americans is in favor of more government involvement in health care coverage:

As we also have found in our tracking polls since February, clear majorities support a variety of methods of expanding health insurance coverage, including Medicaid expansion (**74 percent**), an individual mandate (**68 percent**), an employer mandate (**64 percent**) and a public plan (59 percent). [emphasis added]⁷

¹ Patients First Website, <http://joinpatientsfirst.com>. Accessed 7/28/2009.

² SourceWatch.org.

[http://sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Americans For Prosperity](http://sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Americans+For+Prosperity). Accessed 7/28/2009.

³ SourceWatch.org. [http://sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Koch Industries](http://sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Koch+Industries). Accessed 7/28/2009.

⁴ OpenSecrets.org. <http://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/clientsum.php?lname=Koch+Industries&year=2008>. Accessed 7/28/2009.

⁵ SourceWatch.org. [http://sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Americans For Prosperity](http://sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Americans+For+Prosperity). Accessed 7/28/2009.

⁶ Center for American Progress. *Tim Phillips, The Man Behind The 'Americans For Prosperity' Corporate Front Group Factory*. May 29, 2009. <http://wonkroom.thinkprogress.org/2009/05/29/afp-timphillips-astro turf/>. Accessed 7/28/2009.

⁷ Kaiser Family Foundation. Kaiser Health Tracking Poll, July 2009. <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/upload/7945.pdf>. Accessed 7/28/2009.