

## Congressman John Delaney

- Female: Welcome to Conversations on Health Care with Mark Masselli and Margaret Flinter, a show where we speak to the top thought leaders in health innovation, health policy, care delivery and the great minds who are shaping the healthcare of the future.
- This week Mark and Margaret speak with former Maryland Congressman, John Delaney, the First Democrat to announce his run for the Presidency in 2020. Congressman Delaney talks about his unique approach to expanding healthcare, which maintains a role for the insurance industry, so that consumers have choices. The centrist democrat and entrepreneur also talks about the need to take a market approach to addressing pressing issues like climate change.
- Lori Robertson also checks in, the Managing Editor of Factcheck.org, looks at misstatements spoken about health policy in the public domain, separating the fake from the facts. We end with a bright idea that's improving health and well-being in everyday lives.
- If you have comments, please email us at [chcradio@chc1.com](mailto:chcradio@chc1.com) or find us on Facebook, Twitter or wherever you listen to podcast. You can also hear us by asking Alexa to play the program Conversations on Health Care. Now, stay tuned for our interview with Democratic presidential candidate John Delaney on Conversations on Health Care.
- Mark Masselli: We're speaking today with former Congressman, John Delaney, candidate for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination. Congressman Delaney represented Maryland's sixth congressional district in the US House of Representatives from 2013 to 2019. Previously, as an entrepreneur, he started two businesses: HealthCare Financial Partners, which provided loans to small healthcare practices; and Capital Source, which invested in small businesses in economically distressed areas.
- He won the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 2004. He earned his BA at Columbia and his law degree from Georgetown. Congressman Delaney, welcome to Conversations on Health Care.
- John Delaney: Great to be with you.
- Mark Masselli: You have the distinction of being the First Democrat to throw your hat in the ring for the 2020 presidential nomination and you're considered as more of a centrist democrat in this very crowded field. I had the opportunity to be in Iowa, at the Wing Ding and heard you and I thought you gave great presentation talking about the strong business sense that you bring to the campaign through your candidacy.
- I wonder if you could talk about the motivating factor that led you to enter the presidential race and how you would define what makes your candidacy unique?

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John Delaney: Well, I think what motivated me most is the sense that our government -- our federal government, is just broken. It's broken for lots of reasons. The biggest reason it's broken is the complete inability of the political parties to actually find common ground and get anything done and that has really hurt the American people, because the world has changed very rapidly and driven by things like technological innovation and globalization.

These forces have been really disruptive to lots of people and lots of communities. There are things that our government should have done a long time ago to address them. We didn't do them, because we're too busy fighting and we're too busy engaged in partisan warfare. It's really hurting our country, you know, and I think the future is coming at us very rapidly.

These changes we've seen over the last several decades are accelerating. I just think we need a President who actually cares about trying to bring the country together to get things done. That's really at the end of the day, why I decided to run for President, because I think I'm uniquely positioned to do that. I had a very strong bipartisan track record in the Congress and as someone who spent most of my career in the private sector, building things and getting things done, I think that's the kind of background we needed our next President, we need a unifier not a divider. We need a doer not a talker.

Margaret Flinter: Well, Congressman, as you know, you were successful entrepreneur building a business in the healthcare sector that provided loans to practices and healthcare entities looking to build their organizations. Certainly, healthcare is front and center. In the debates, we're hearing a lot of talk from the democratic candidates about the American health care system. Some folks are very focused on a need to shift to a Medicare for All system.

We're really interested in hearing your thoughts, you support universal access to healthcare, but you said we should be wary of such a radical shift as Medicare for All in the healthcare infrastructure. We would really welcome you sharing with our audience, some of the aspects of your better care healthcare proposal and maybe helping our listeners understand what might set this apart from other positions on healthcare?

John Delaney: [inaudible 00:04:45] the question up well, because I do favor a universal health care system. What I mean by that is I favor a system where every American has healthcare as a basic human right and a right to a healthcare plan as a right of citizenship. My Better Care plan does that, but what makes my Better Care plan different than Medicare for All, is that it's not a single payer healthcare system. A single payer healthcare system means that government is responsible for all the bills. Very few countries actually have a single payer system.

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Most countries have a form of universal health care, but it's not single payer. My Better Care program is modeled in many ways after what Germany has --

Margaret Flinter: Yeah.

John Delaney: -- which is effectively a system where everyone gets a basic government healthcare plan as a right. But then they have options. The first option they have is they could opt out of the government plan, get a tax credit and use that tax credit to buy their own private insurance.

The other option they have is they can take their government plan and improve it with a supplemental health plan, which is also private insurance, which is what Medicare beneficiaries many of them do right now.

Margaret Flinter: Yeah.

John Delaney: Then the third option is they could get their employer healthcare and then they could take their tax credits again because they're not using the government plan and they could turn that credit into their employer or their union as a way of offsetting the costs. Everyone has basic government healthcare as a right, but then there's kind of a private market that floats on top of it, where people have lots of options. I think that's a better healthcare system, I think that leads to a healthier and stronger healthcare marketplace. It also gives the American people the choices that they're interested in.

Mark Masselli: I was just thinking about what Americans are probably animated about in healthcare and I was reading the headlines that noted that the cost of employee provided health coverage past \$20,000 per family. In addition, individuals, families were paying about \$6,000 a year up and healthcare costs represents about 20% of our GDP. We're on the way to \$3.5 trillion a year in expenditures. What would Better Care plan look like in terms of trying to address the issues around cost? How do you think you can tackle that outside of a larger theoretical framework?

John Delaney: In many ways, we have a universal health care system right now and it's called the emergency room. Any American or any person in our country for that matter, who shows up at an emergency room, they're required by law to receive care. The problem is that care is often 10 to 20 times more expensive than if you would have went to a doctor. By creating an organized form of universal health care, you create the opportunity to get people in a lower cost setting for their care.

The second thing it does is it allows you to drive preventative medicine better, because if people aren't in a health insurance plan or covered by some form of government healthcare and they're just out

there uninsured, they never do preventative care, which we all know can save a lot of money.

The only way ultimately to lower healthcare costs is to make the system more efficient. That means ensuring the care is delivered at the lowest possible point of cost, creating incentives in the healthcare system for providers, like the Affordable Care Act, for example, that's a really good incentives in it. Things like penalizing hospitals, who have had lots of readmissions, to encourage them to actually give the care they need the first time and do things to make sure the patient isn't readmitted. You can't really begin to drive efficiencies in the healthcare system unless everyone is in a form of organized healthcare.

Margaret Flinter: Congressman, we've been talking about the cost of healthcare being in the headlines, but another set of headlines on the front page and then again on the obituary pages of our local newspapers, relates to the opioid crisis, which has just --

John Delaney: Right.

Margaret Flinter: -- caused such devastation in all of our communities across this country and there has been progress made towards stabilizing it, certainly, in just the recent year or two and some funding and some programs, but 70,000 deaths last year, beyond shocking.

You've outlined a plan to confront the crisis with a multi-pronged approach and we'd like you to comment on what your plan is for addressing the opioid crisis and perhaps as well as appropriately holding responsible individuals that may have contributed to setting it in motion.

John Delaney: Yeah, I definitely think it needs the accountability. I think many pharmaceutical companies knew exactly what was going on and they actually encourage more aggressive sales practices.

I think not only the company should be held financially liable, but I think executives to the extent they have this knowledge, should be held personally liable, in a criminal context, because we lose 70,000 Americans to addiction every year. That's a Vietnam a year. That scale of this tragedy is overwhelming. We have to address it.

I think what it takes to address it is we need more resources, we've underfunded prevention, we've underfunded mental health. I mean, if you think about the amount of funding we provided against Zika and Ebola, which are two very serious things and deserve the funding, by the way; but we provided billions of dollars in funding to those two situations and I think three Americans died.

Mark Masselli: Right. Right.

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John Delaney: I'm not diminishing it. I think the funding was appropriated and prevented it being a much larger scale situation. But for years, people advocated for hundreds of millions of dollars in funding for the opioid crisis and they came up empty handed.

Margaret Flinter: Yeah.

John Delaney: Yet, we use 70,000 a year.

Margaret Flinter: Yeah.

John Delaney: I think it's funding to prevention. I think it's funding treatment. I think it's backing local interventions that work. I think it's really creating parody in our mental healthcare system; but we can also ignore the economic opportunity piece of this, because clearly, if you have economically distressed communities, you're more likely to have the environment that can lead to addiction.

Mark Masselli: We're speaking today with former Congressman, John Delaney candidate for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination. He represented Maryland's six congressional district in the US House of Representatives from 2013 through 2019.

You don't want to pull the thread on your tenure in Congress, you are a pro-business moderate democrat and it seemed that that orientation informs your approach to many things, including climate change. You recently announced a multi-trillion dollar climate plan that you say will achieve far more than the so-called Green Deal, by promoting the private sector.

I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that plan, but also about the climate itself and the challenges we face globally on this. Also why isn't it animating? I was reading, I think Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight comment that Inslee, his candidacy, probably speaks to that climate may not be the thing that's animating the electorate this round. A couple of questions in there; but first, certainly your sense of the challenges of the climate that we face?

John Delaney: Sure. Well, I don't think, it's the -- climate is incredibly important for democratic primary voters as it should be. I think it's very hard to run for President as a one issue candidate, because the problems the American face [inaudible 00:11:59] face are much greater than one issue. We want our President to speak broadly to a range of issues. I think that's one reason why the governor's campaign, which we basically framed all around climate change didn't work.

I also think every one of the democratic candidates are very good on this issue. It becomes -- it's not like he was the only one who cares about climate change, right? We all have very aggressive plans. My take on it is very different, because I'm much more clear-eyed about

things than I think a lot of people and what I mean by that is 80% of the energy that this country consumes and about 85% of the energy that the world consumes comes from fossil fuels.

When you think about getting us off fossil fuels, you have to think about how do we replace that energy, because fundamentally, the political system will not deny its citizens' energy, nor will it just deliver them energy that is incredibly expensive to deal with climate change, because the political system doesn't have that kind of long-term orientation, it has a short-term orientation.

You have to say to yourself, okay, I want to deal with climate change, but I can't do it on the backs of hard working citizens. That's where I'm thinking, I'm different. I mean, a lot of these people are proposing things that will increase energy costs on the American people dramatically. When you have a situation where half of our country can't afford their basic necessities, just not going to ever get things done that solve climate change on the backs of hardworking Americans.

You have to be clear-eyed about the challenge and not engage in this kind of fairy tale solution. The first thing I propose, which is to put a price on carbon, which is sometimes known as a carbon tax.

The reason that works and the reason that's the best way forward, initially, is what it does is it makes fossil fuels more expensive and discourages their use and so it effectively makes all the energy that any of us consume from fossil fuels a lot more expensive and it makes us not use it. But what it does, that's unique in my proposal, it takes all the money that's raised in the carbon fee, because effectively what the government is doing is putting a fee or a tax on carbon.

Over 10 years, it raised \$3 trillion and then it takes all that money and it gives it right back to the American people in a dividend and every American gets the same dividend. If you're a hardworking American, working-class, middle-class American, your dividend will be bigger than the amount that your energy costs go up.

We created an incentive for people to change where they get their energy from both businesses and individuals, but we do it in a way where the costs of that transition are not borne by working Americans. That's one of the cornerstones of my plan. It's called a carbon fee or dividend. I introduced this idea in the Congress and I introduced it on a bipartisan basis, so this can happen.

Then the rest of my plan is really at the end of the day a massive bet on American innovation, because fundamentally, we're not going to be able to solve this problem globally, unless the United States of America, which is the best innovation economy in the world,

effectively innovates new battery storage, transmission and direct your capture technologies to deliver around the world, because we cannot expect the developing world where billions of people in the next several decades will go from poverty to the middle-class. We can't expect these countries to deny them energy.

The energy they're going to give them right now is fossil fuels, because it's abundant and it's cheap. We have to basically come up with new energy solutions. By the way, it's a huge economic opportunity if we do that, to solve this problem globally. I've called for kind of Paris 2.0 to be a global consortium of all the developed nations around the world, who contribute money and intellectual capital, coming up with the innovation that can effectively get the world off fossils.

Margaret Flinter: Well, Congressman, I think you're making a great point that we can't afford to have any single issue, because we have so many issues that we need to deal with --

John Delaney: We do.

Margaret Flinter: -- as a country and if you would allow me, I want to just go back a moment to when we were talking about the opioid crisis and you made a comment that we really need mental health parity in this country and you've really taken a strong approach on this around the need for behavioral and mental health services, it's such a great need. Neither adults nor children, or anybody else really across the country equitably have access to what we would consider high performance behavioral health services.

Certainly in our organization, we've taken an approach to fully integrating behavioral health into primary care and are studying and researching the outcome and the effectiveness of that, but it's just not the case that it's readily available for most Americans. I know you've been working on some proposals to address this as well, America's unmet behavioral healthcare needs. Tell us what you're proposing?

John Delaney: Well, I think, as part of having universal health care system, you have to have a minimum set of mental health benefits that address the need. You also have to increase reimbursement. Until we have universal health care, the most important thing for us to do is increase reimbursement within Medicaid, because while many Medicaid programs offer mental health, the reimbursement rates are so low, that providers don't take it.

Like in New Hampshire, for example, I think they pay about 18 bucks for mental health through the Medicaid program. If you are a mental health provider in the state of New Hampshire and you could take

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private pay or commercial insurance or Medicare, why would you take Medicaid [crosstalk].

Margaret Flinter: Or no -- you take no insurance at all, as we're hearing [crosstalk].

John Delaney: No insurance at all.

Margaret Flinter: Yeah.

Mark Masselli: Yeah.

John Delaney: Right. You have to increase -- you have to have a -- that's why it's important to initially fix Medicaid, but also basically have a form of universal health care and make sure that there's good mental health benefit in it and that the reimbursement rates are sufficient.

Mark Masselli: Earlier you were talking about energy and innovation, I was thinking about those two words, in the context of what you're doing. It must require an enormous amount of energy to be out on the campaign trail, as much as you have been.

Innovation, I'm wondering, you've had this rare opportunity to talk to Americans, what have you learned from them in terms of the innovations that they're thinking? I'm sure many of those conversations animate you in terms of your candidacy and the like, but tell us a little bit about what it's like to be out on the road and what sustains you?

John Delaney: Well, I mean, I just find these issues are important and I'm about to launch a tour where we focus on entrepreneurship and innovation in the rural economy, something that I think is very important. Really talking about the issues that matter is, what sustains me.

Margaret Flinter: We've been speaking today with former Maryland Congressman, John Delaney, a candidate for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination. You can learn more about his campaign platform and his vision for the future by going to [johndelaney.com](http://johndelaney.com), or follow him on twitter @JohnDelaney. Congressman, thank you so much for your commitment to improving the public good and for joining us today on Conversations on Health Care.

John Delaney: Great. Thank you very much.

Mark Masselli: Conversations on Health Care, we want our audience to be truly and to know when it comes to the facts about healthcare reform and policy. Lori Robertson is an award winning journalist and Managing Editor of FactCheck.org, a non-partisan, non-profit consumer advocate for voters that aim to reduce the level of deception in U.S. politics. Lori, what have you got for us this week?

Lori Robertson: President Donald Trump has repeatedly criticized energy efficient



light bulbs, saying that people are being forced to use bulbs that are more expensive and contain hazardous gases and give off light that's not as good as incandescence.

Experts, however, say that's an outdated and inaccurate description of the current technology. Trump spoke in early September about his administration's decision to reverse a 2017 rule that would have extended energy efficiency standards to irregularly shaped bulb and prohibited the sales of most traditional incandescent. He said that people were being forced to buy bulb that were, "very dangerous with all of the gases." He added, "it's considered almost like a waste site."

Trump's comments apply to some degree to compact fluorescent or CFL bulbs, which contain mercury; but light-emitting diode or LED bulbs are the dominant environmentally-friendly technology. They have no such safety risks and in most cases, provide comparable or even superior light at a cheaper lifetime costs than incandescence.

CFLs work by exciting mercury molecules to produce ultraviolet light, because mercury is a neurotoxin, it does mean that if a bulb is broken, special steps should be taken during cleanup.

The Environmental Protection Agency recommends airing out the room for five to 10 minutes, before carefully collecting and placing any glass fragments into a glass jar, until the bulb can be taken to a recycling center. The mercury issue is a legitimate drawback to CFL, but no one is compelled to buy them over LED's, which do not contain mercury or any other hazardous gases. That's my Fact Check for this week. I'm Lori Robertson, Managing Editor of Factcheck.org.

Female: FactCheck.org is committed to factual accuracy from the country's major political players and is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. If you have a fact that you'd like checked, e-mail us at [chcradio.com](mailto:chcradio.com) we'll have FactCheck.org's Lori Robertson check it out for you, here on Conversations on Health Care.

[Music]

Mark Masselli: Each week Conversations highlights a bright idea about how to make wellness a part of our communities and everyday lives. Currently, some 30 million Americans have Type 2 Diabetes and that number is expected to climb substantially in the coming decades.

Amazon, the creator of the interactive voice technology known as Alexa and pharmaceutical entity, Merck teamed up to launch a competition for developers to create a tool using existing technology that would help folks better manage their diabetes. The winner, Sugarpod.

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Anne Weiler: The challenge was how do you help someone newly diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes and we already had interactive care plans for people with Type 2 Diabetes, they were mobile and then we thought, well, sure we can voice-enable those care plans. What we thought that was the most interesting was the integrated care plan that included a device, which is a voice powered scale and foot scanner that looks for diabetic foot ulcers and we thought that the scale was a nice way of fitting into a routine that someone already had in their day

Mark Masselli: CEO, Anne Weiler says they were intrigued by the opportunity to incorporate Alexa's voice technology, along with some simple technologies that exist, but had never been put together.

Anne Weiler: The three components are voice-enabled scale and foot scanner, a mobile care plan, because voice isn't always the best interface and then a voice interaction that could happen with any sort of Alexa device.

Mark Masselli: Chief Technology Officer, Mike Vance, Nolanberg [PH] said creating a user-friendly interface was important and they got great feedback from consumers.

Mike: Yes, but anytime you want to do interventions on people that are already kind of well, you need to have very low touch, lightweight interactions, things that don't interfere with a person's life and can kind of gently nudge them in the right direction.

Mark Masselli: While weights are measured and feet photographed, Alexa offers suggestions for weight management diet and exercise. Sugarpod is simple constructed, Alexa enabled weight and foot ulcer scanner that empowers newly diagnosed diabetes patients better manage their disease, providing a flow of important clinical information, leading to better diabetes management for patients and providers. Now that's a bright idea. You've been listening to Conversations on Health Care, I'm Mark Masselli.

Margaret Flinter: I'm Margaret Flinter.

Mark Masselli: Peace and health.

Female: Conversations on Health Care is recorded at WESU at Wesleyan University, streaming live at [chcradio.com](http://chcradio.com), iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcasts.

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