

**THE BUFFALO NEWS** **PRINT THIS** [Click to Print](#)[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)**ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY****Single-payer health plan discussed**

By Kathy Kellogg  
CATTARAUGUS CORRESPONDENT  
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ALLEGANY — Several members of St. Bonaventure University's first class of premedical students in the Franciscan Health Care Program were on hand to help the Health Care Access Coalition, a doctor and a congressman bring the single-payer health care option into focus.

The students and the coalition, along with an audience of about 80 people, gathered Sunday in Walsh Auditorium on campus for a discussion of "Single Payer Health Care Under the Microscope" by Rep. Eric Massa, D-Corning, and Dr. Andy Coates, a physician.

The two cited lower costs and open access as key reasons for placing the single-payer concept at the forefront of the health care debate, pointing out that as much as 70 percent of medical office overhead goes to pay for billing insurance companies instead of providing coverage for the uninsured.

Massa, who repeated his vow to vote against the current health care reform bill in Congress and who has not yet seen President Obama's latest proposal, asked the audience to consider the fundamental question: "Is health care a privilege or a right?"

He noted that the Constitution doesn't contain the words "health care" but does give Congress authority over the public welfare. He said single-payer is not communist or socialist, but should be seen as a financial delivery system costing only 6 percent of the nation's health care bill, and one that would bring increased quality with more access and options.

He pointed to what he called a "conundrum" of the current employment-based system that creates

enormous wealth for the for-profit health care insurers while denying coverage to a portion of the country's citizens.

Coates told the audience that he arrived at the single-payer idea after his experiences and research, noting his earliest dealings with patients showed his care missed the mark because they couldn't pay for the prescriptions that he recommended. He said he wanted to find a method of getting the money issue out of the way of the treatment.

"It's very simple economics. If we pool all the resources, it will be affordable for all," said Coates, quoting a study that showed \$400 billion in waste and only \$12 billion in profits for the insurance industry's bureaucratic apparatus.

"When we started out a few years ago, the Health Care Access Coalition members wanted to get single-payer on the front burner," said coalition director Athena Godet-Calogeras.

"Now that it's there, we have to make sure that what is cooked works for all the people in the country," she said.

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