

Idaho Falls Post Register, Friday, July 24, 2009 – by Samatha Pak

Residents rally for health care

The demonstrators presented Sen. Risch with a letter urging him to support a public insurance option.

To prevent blood clots from forming in her legs, 63-year-old Alana Snarr has to wear therapeutic socks that provide her with extra support and increase blood circulation. The Idaho Falls native must wear the socks every day, and sometimes at night, throughout the year.

But living on a fixed income and being two years shy of qualifying for Medicare and ineligible for Medicaid makes it difficult for Snarr to afford the socks, which cost \$45 a pair. "It's really sad," she said. "I've tried everything I can think of."

About a dozen people gathered Thursday outside Sen. James Risch's Idaho Falls office to urge the senator to support public health care.

Snarr was one of more than a dozen sign-carrying demonstrators gathered outside Sen. James Risch's office in Idaho Falls on Thursday afternoon to show their support of public health insurance. Those rallying also presented Risch with a letter showing the senator that a number of Idahoans support public health care and urging him to do the same.



Chuck Vogel, one of the rally organizers, said the letter advises support of a public health plan that would be readily implemented, available to all, reasonably priced and accountable to the public. Vogel said the country's current health care system is more focused on money than on patient care.

Spencer Blanding attended the rally because he believes in public health and wellness policies that benefit everyone. He knows several people who are financially destitute due to medical bills and said their difficulties could have been prevented if more affordable health care had been available. "If the U.S. is one of the greatest countries in the world like many people say, then we should have policies that support health and wellness for all citizens," Blanding said. "These policies should help everyone both financially and health-wise."

In response to the rally and the letter, Amy Taylor, Risch's regional director, said that although Risch feels the need for health care reform, he opposes a government-run system because he believes Medicare, Medicaid and other current government programs are not sustainable. Taylor added that Risch would like to talk to everyone in the industry before endorsing any health care reform bill. In the meantime, Snarr said all she can do is hope for a solution. "I wish I could pull the money out of the sky, but it just can't happen," she said.