

# Audience at health care forum backs single-payer proposal

By David Montero

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BOULDER — There may be five proposals being considered to reform health care in Colorado, but only one seemed to satisfy most of the 150 gathered at the Millennium Hotel on Thursday night.

That proposal was the so-called single-payer system.

One after another, they strode to the microphone — breast cancer survivors, parents of children with autism and even a few people with no illnesses — all asking members of the Blue Ribbon Commission for Health Care Reform to radically restructure the current system.

People like William Starr, a healthy 84-year-old Boulder resident.

“I have the feeling that this is all a put-on if you’re making a fifth proposal that is backing the insurance companies when there is only one proposal that fits what your guiding principles were,” Starr said, advocating the single-payer system.

The public comment sessions were set up by the commission to gather public input on how to change the way health care is delivered for state residents.

Four separate proposals sponsored, respectively, by a power-

## What’s Next?

**Blue Ribbon Commission for Health Care Reform** continues meetings throughout the state.

■ **Tonight:** 5-8 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church, Aspen Room, 105 N. Weber, Colorado Springs.

■ **Others:** 12 meetings running through Oct. 13. For a list of meetings, go to [www.colorado.gov/208commission](http://www.colorado.gov/208commission)

■ **The commission** will compile the comments, both verbal and written, and consider them before it makes any recommendations to state lawmakers.

■ **Commission** will get the first draft of the fifth proposal back in the middle of the month.

ful union, a consortium of underwriters, health care industry officials and the single-payer plan went through several drafts and changes this year and could be forwarded to state lawmakers this winter for consideration. A fifth proposal is currently in its first draft and won’t be reviewed by the commission until the middle of the month.

Regina Hathorne, a 55-year-old Boulder resident, said the

proposed cap of \$50,000 for catastrophic care was “laughable” when put into context of what is considered catastrophic.

“This country is currently experiencing economic racism when it comes to health insurance,” she said. “The question is do we all deserve the same health insurance? It’s a huge change in society’s values.”

The five proposals appear to be a stab at that, with Gov. Bill Ritter urging the state to find a way to cover the more than 780,000 Coloradans currently without health insurance.

Though the tide at the Boulder meeting was decidedly toward single-payer, commissioners were quick to point out that the sentiment might be different as they solicit public comments throughout the state.

And at least one speaker, Brian Schwartz, proposed getting government out of health care entirely — calling Medicaid a “failure” and an example of why single-payer won’t work. Instead, he advocated the free-market system.

“Should we have single-payer food and housing?” he asked. “Didn’t we settle that with Soviet Russia and North Korea? Why is health care different?”

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