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Workers' Cooperative National Association's plan to reform health-care in America

Member-run cooperatives are not focused around a particular interest group or political stance. They will provide an impartial and objective voice that is based only on the premise that the good of the whole is more important than the interest of a few.

- A paraphrase from the Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center

Our Mission: To create and make available to all Americans an affordable, consumer-driven, free-market, quality health-care system in partnership with government agencies.

Brief Description: Workers' Cooperative National Association (WCNA), a non-profit Association whose initial members are Workers Cooperative of Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee and Texas. These states, referred to as Region One (1), were selected as charter members based on needs. Texas has the largest number of uninsured in the United States. According to a July 27, 2010, *New York Times* article by Kevin Sack, "There are more uninsured residents of Texas—6.1 million and counting—than there are people in 33 states." And Alabama is dominated by one insurance company. Insurance companies have a near monopoly in all charter member states and can raise rates and reduce options "with impunity."

The idea of WCNA is that the business is owned by its members and everyone works together for the common goal, to provide affordable quality health care to its members over the pursuit of profit.

Cooperatives have a long and valued history in the United States

The cooperative as a modern business structure originated in 19th-century Britain. In response to the depressed economic conditions (similar to conditions in America today), some people began to form cooperative businesses to meet their needs. Among them was a group of 28 workers who were dissatisfied with the merchants in their community. They formed a consumer cooperative known as the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in 1844.

The Society began by opening a cooperative store that sold items such as flour and sugar to members, and the Society quickly grew to include other enterprises.

In the early 1900s, the United States government began to pass laws that provided a favorable environment for cooperative development. The depressed condition in the agriculture sector in 1908, prompted President Theodore Roosevelt to propose and Congress to pass the Federal Farm Loan Act in 1916.

America's agricultural sector went through a difficult period as prices collapsed after World War I ended. As part of the response to the adverse economic condition (similar to the healthcare market place today), three Republican presidents—Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover—strongly endorsed agricultural cooperatives.



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The Agricultural marketing Act of 1929, which included the establishment of a fund for cooperative loans, also helped to strengthen the cooperative movement.

The truth about health care and cooperatives

Some in government, business leaders (special-interest groups), and politicians have misrepresented the new health care law—the “Affordable Care Act” (the Act)—as a government takeover of health care that will increase cost and cause disruption of the marketplace. Those statements are self-serving and false. This is the same kind of ploy another special-interest group, utility company executives, tried to pull in July 1935 to keep the government from forming the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), when they wrote a report claiming that very few rural farms were without electrical service. But the newly established REA and the related rural electric cooperatives soon proved that the utility company executives report was self-serving and false.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 7037 establishing the REA on May 11, 1935. Now nearly every farm in America has electrical service, thanks largely to the effort of electrical cooperatives.

Member-run health care cooperatives can bring the same advances to America’s health care system that electrical cooperatives brought to rural America some 70 years ago. Workers’ Cooperative National Association will lead the way in this crucial reform.

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