



## Rethinking the path to winning single payer

*Featuring Michael Lighty,  
Healthy California Now*

### ***This time on Code WACK!***

**Winning Medicare for All in the U.S. may be at a standstill at the federal level, but it's a different story in the states.** In 2021 alone, 18 single payer bills were introduced in states such as Massachusetts, New York, Colorado, and Oregon.

***Winning in California -- the most populous nation in the state -- could be a game changer.*** And, *not one but two* bills have been introduced in the California State Legislature this year.

**What's the latest single payer bill introduced in the California Senate and how is it different from previous bills?** How will it work with CalCare, which was introduced in the California State Assembly this year for the second time?

To find out, we spoke with **Michael Lighty**, president of the [Healthy California Now](#) Coalition, and former constituency director for Bernie 2020.

***What's the thinking behind this new strategy?***

# SHOW NOTES

## WE DISCUSS

*Is there a connection between the “Healthy California for All Now” campaign and Governor Newsom’s “Healthy California for All” commission?*

“...the Healthy California for All Now campaign essentially builds upon the recommendations of the [Healthy California for All] commission ...

“... it's the commission that says ... we can save money through single payer ... the comparison between a single-payer approach and doing nothing is \$500 billion over 10 years. A half a trillion dollars over 10 years is the difference between doing nothing and adopting single payer.

“That's a huge amount of savings, but that's really secondary to the lives saved.” – **Michael Lighty**

*Why is it so important to get waivers from the federal government for a state single-payer program?*

“Well, the official process under the Affordable Care Act requires that the state legislature pass a bill that then is submitted to (the) Federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (called CMS), and they decide whether to approve that application for a waiver of certain provisions that exist in federal law.

“... then the monies that have been allocated from the federal government to California through the Affordable Care Act, through Medicaid, through other federal programs, can be pooled into a single source ...” – **Michael Lighty**

***California now has two single payer-related bills in the state legislature, AB 1690 CalCare, and SB 770 Unified Healthcare Financing. Do they work together and if so, how?***

“The idea is that if we take a set of steps to engage stakeholders .., and bring them together to collaborate *at the same time* we are talking to the federal government about the kind of approvals that they will do ... those two tracks can come together and we can create recommendations to the legislature to then ultimately pass a full scale single payer bill ...

“... there's no reason why these two [bills] can't come together to produce a system of guaranteed health care in California.” – **Michael Lighty**

## Helpful Links

**[State Single Payer Legislation](#), *Healthcare NOW***

**[More States Are Proposing Single-Payer Health Care - Why Aren't They Succeeding](#). *FiveThirtyEight***

**[Healthy California for All Commission Releases Report on Strategies to Implement Unified Financing Single-Payer System](#), *The Source on Healthcare Price & Competition, UC Law***

[California nurses renew fight for guaranteed health care](#), *National Nurses United Press Release*

[California Senator Wiener Announces New Legislation to Seek Federal Waivers for a System of Guaranteed Healthcare](#), *Senator Scott Wiener Press Release*

## Episode Transcript

*Read the full [episode transcript](#).*

## Biography: Michael Lighty

**Michael Lighty**, President, [Healthy California Now](#), has organized, advocated and developed policy for single-payer, Medicare for All nationally and in California for over 30 years.

He is a founding Fellow of the [Sanders Institute](#), and most recently, he was the Healthcare Constituency Director for Bernie 2020.

Formerly he was director of public policy for the California Nurses Association/ National Nurses United. He was lead policy analyst, a leader of Campaign for a Healthy California and testified on behalf of the single-payer bill, SB 562.

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