



**Making the case for  
single payer:  
When you've got yours,  
why fight for everyone  
else?**

*With Ada Briceño*

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

**What would organized labor, and the workers they represent, gain under Medicare for All?** Despite these gains, ***why are unions still divided on the issue?*** What would it take for **labor to speak with a unified voice** on this issue?

To find out, we spoke to **Ada Briceño**, co-president of UNITE HERE Local 11, which represents more than 30,000 hotel workers in Southern California and in Arizona. She's also a **Democratic National Committee** member, chair of the **Orange County Democratic Party** and was named one of Orange County's 100 Most Influential by the Orange County Register four times since 2014.

## ***SHOW NOTES***

# WE DISCUSS

*Where do most labor unions stand today on the issue of single payer and why is that?*

"Well, there are many of my colleagues that are standing strong with Medicare for All, and there are others that are not. And I think that, you know, some of the reasons why they're not is because we spent our lives fighting for those prized benefits.

"And when you sacrifice so much for them, it is really tough to see an alternative. And there's a sense of pride. Nobody else has these kinds of benefits like we do, and therefore we've got to protect them. We protect them for our members from the boss and from the insurance companies and from everything. And we put all our weight into them. And so I think for some folks it's scary to think about the alternative." - **Ada Briceño**

*Would you say that most unions are still kind of hesitant with Medicare for all? Or is it like 50/50? How would you characterize it?*

"Most are not there. And, and I would say that it's not an easy thing, you know, to be there because labor is in the fight of their lives just to keep our existence, you know?

"And so we are often preoccupied, but because we are in the fight of our lives and because it is so tough, we've got to think outside the box and we've got to take big risks and we've got to be bold in so many ways if we're going to change the tide. Right? And this is one thing that would take the burden ... off of us to be able to do many great things. And on top of everything else that will do [good] for the American people..." - **Ada Briceño**

## *How can we create a more constructive dialogue on these issues with unions?*

"I think it's listening, asking folks. I don't have those issues, as I said, but sitting down with those folks that have those concerns and trying to put, as advocates, as fighters for Medicare for All, putting ourselves in the shoes of each and every single one of their unions that has left their sweat and tears for those benefits...

"So for example, lifting the voices of folks ... that are [single-payer supporters], you know, and figuring out how did they get there? What in essence happened? Lifting those stories where, you know, the generations that are coming in, you know, might be more open-minded to a different system than what... someone like me that has been in there for 32 years might resist. Because sometimes we just think, 'Hey, things are that same way. We've just got to protect what's there.'" - **Ada Briceño**

## Helpful Links

[Unite Here Local 11](#)

[Democratic Party of Orange County](#)

[Unions Fighting Single-Payer Are Fighting Against Their Workers' Interests, Truthout](#)

[Resolution 10: Winning Guaranteed Health Care for All, AFL-CIO](#)

[Why Did Labor Leaders Vote Against Medicare for All in the Middle of a Pandemic?, Jacobin](#)

[Why Would A Union Oppose Medicare For All?, Current Affairs](#)

# Episode Transcript

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

## Biography: Ada Briceño

Ada Briceño has dedicated her career to uplifting marginalized voices and bridging communities.

In addition to union organizing and political work, she has led many civil rights, immigrant rights, women's rights, and environmental efforts.

She was named one of Orange County's "100 Most Influential" by the Orange County Register for 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2014.

Ada Briceño immigrated to the United States at age 6, when her family fled the civil war in Nicaragua.

Today, she serves as Co-President of UNITE HERE Local 11, representing over 32,000 hotel workers in Los Angeles County, Orange County and Arizona.

She is a Democratic National Committee member and Chair of the Democratic Party of Orange County.

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