



What's at stake in 2024? Your health care

featuring
Assemblymember
Ash Kalra

This time on Code WACK!

Will California's new single payer bill, [CalCare](#), be a tough sell for the state's legislature, even if ***most of the state's residents want Medicare for All?*** **What political hurdles must be cleared before such a bill would pass?** And what would it mean for single payer efforts ***if Donald Trump is re-elected president*** this year?

To find out, we spoke to [Assemblymember Ash Kalra](#). As a longstanding champion of single-payer health care, Assemblymember Kalra introduced statewide legislation known as CalCare ([AB 1400](#) in 2021 and [AB 2200](#) in 2023), which would guarantee comprehensive, high-quality health care for all Californians as a human right.

This is the second episode in a two-part series.

SHOW NOTES

WE DISCUSS

So last time we talked about people's misperceptions about cost and single payer. For example, California Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas said that Assembly Bill 2200 bill could be a tough sell given the state's budget deficit this year. What are your thoughts on that?

"No, look, I mean the speaker's being honest and I appreciate that. You know, he's a friend of mine. He voted for AB 1400 when he was, you know, he subbed in on the (Assembly) Health Committee, voted for it, voted on appropriations. He was a co-author on it in the past.

"Obviously in a speaker role, it's a different role. Just like our President Pro Tem Mike McGuire was a previous co-author. He's not now 'cause he's in a different role and we want them to be honest.

"They've got to speak tough truths about the fact that it is going to be an uphill battle and we have to speak about the financial aspects of it. So, you know, I don't begrudge him at all for being honest about that. I think we need him to be an honest broker in this. And he will be. But at the end of the day, it's up to us as a community. It's up to me as an author. It's up to [California Nurses Association] as sponsors." – **Assemblyman Ash Kalra**

Right. But if it's gonna save money, then it shouldn't be a tough sell. . .

"Yeah, it is true except that part of the problem of being on a budget deficit, it raises fears and concerns of our colleagues and of Californians. So you know, even though we can say yes, you know, this will ultimately save us money in the short term, there's a lot of anxiety because of our budget deficit.

“And so it's a very realistic thing for us to have eyes wide open, recognize that folks are gonna bring up the budget deficit even though you're correct that this would ultimately save us money and save Californians - *California families, California businesses* - money as well. We have to keep reminding folks of that.” - **Assemblyman Ash Kalra**

How can we help get CalCare (AB 2200) over the finish line?

“... there's gonna be a hearing in April. So be prepared to be there. Please take a look at the legislation, find out how you can be involved ... see how you can participate ... 'cause this is a movement. We really need a movement to show up to let our legislators know, let my colleagues know, and I love my colleagues.

“I want to make it very clear, if you contact your [legislators] and ... they say, “*We're not sure where we are, I'm not sure where we are on it,*” please don't criticize them ...

“We want everybody to understand this is a big bill. We want folks to understand what they're voting on and communicating with them that you support it is helpful.

“And so I don't need everybody to be a co-author. I just need yes votes on the bill and so I trust my colleagues and I believe we can get it there, but it won't happen because I'm doing it or 'cause the nurses are doing it. It'll happen 'cause all of us are working together on it.” - **Assemblyman Ash Kalra**

Helpful Links

[CalCare](#), *National Nurses United*

[AB-2200 Guaranteed Health Care for All \(2023-2024\)](#)

[7 CalCare Principles](#), *National Nurses United*

[Medicare for All Savings Calculator \(California\)](#), **Healthy California Now**

[What Would Another Trump Presidency Mean for Health Care?](#)
JAMA Forum

[Community Voices: Priorities and Preferences of Californians with Low Incomes for Health Care Reform](#), **Healthy California for All Commission**

Episode Transcript

Read the [episode transcript](#).

Guest Biography - Assemblymember Ash Kalra

Assemblymember Kalra represents **California's 25th Assembly District**, which encompasses the majority of San José, including downtown and open space areas in southeast Santa Clara County. He was first elected in 2016, becoming the first Indian American to serve in the California Legislature in state history, and was re-elected to his fourth term in 2022.

Assemblymember Kalra is the Chair of the Committee on Judiciary and also serves as a member on the Housing & Community Development, Local Government, and Natural Resources committees. He is Chair Emeritus of the California Legislative Progressive Caucus and works to ensure that key legislative priorities are successfully passed on civil rights, criminal justice, economic and worker justice, environmental justice, and housing justice.

Assemblymember Kalra has dedicated his tenure in public service to equity and social justice issues. To confront racism and systemic bias in our systems of justice, he authored the historic California Racial Justice Act of 2020 (AB 2542), a landmark bill addressing racial discrimination in criminal sentencing and convictions and a follow up bill in 2022 (AB 256) to apply the Act retroactively for persons with past convictions.

A longstanding champion of single-payer health care, Assemblymember Kalra introduced AB 1400 in 2021 and AB 2200 in 2023 – known as CalCare – which would guarantee comprehensive, high-quality health care for all Californians as a human right.

Assemblymember Ash Kalra was born in Toronto, Canada, and moved to California as a young child, residing in the same South San José neighborhood where he grew up. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a law degree from Georgetown University.

He is currently serving his fourth term in the state Assembly. Previously he served on the San José City Council for eight years and before that he was a Deputy Public Defender for Santa Clara County for 11 years.

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