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## **Reid makes case for universal health care**

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by [BENNETT HALL Corvallis Gazette-Times](#)

T.R. Reid, a veteran journalist who has emerged as a leading voice for health care reform with books such as “The Healing of America” and documentaries like “Sick Around the World,” will visit the mid-valley this weekend to argue for universal health insurance.

Reid is making several appearances around the state this week, including one at 7 p.m. Saturday at Linn-Benton Community College in Albany, where he’ll give a free lecture titled “Our Costly and Troubled Sick Care System.”

“My whole visit to Oregon is based on one very simple premise: A decent, ethical democracy should provide health care for everybody,” Reid told the Gazette-Times in a telephone interview. “In fact, all other wealthy democracies do provide health care for everybody and, on average, spend about half of what we do.”

My whole visit to Oregon is based on one very simple premise: A decent, ethical democracy should provide health care for everybody,” Reid told the Gazette-Times in a telephone interview. “In fact, all other wealthy democracies do provide health care for everybody and, on average, spend about half of what we do.”

Reid, who currently lives in Denver and works as a reporter for the Washington Post, said he became interested in health care reform during 16 years of working overseas as a foreign correspondent. Other developed countries, he found, were able to provide high-quality, universal health care in well-equipped facilities at much lower costs than the U.S., and he began to wonder why his own country couldn’t do the same.

The Affordable Care Act, President Barack Obama’s signature piece of health care legislation, extended coverage to millions of Americans, but Reid pointed out that it will still leave an estimated 30 million without insurance by 2020.

“We think that’s a national disgrace,” he said.

As politically unpopular as Obamacare is, Reid thinks it’s unlikely that Congress will ever plug those coverage gaps or address the ACA’s other shortcomings, such as high deductibles and coinsurance payments for some plans that discourage many people from seeking medical treatment.

“We’re not going to get there through national legislation. Congress is gridlocked and Washington is polarized,” he said. “We think the way the U.S. is going to get to universal coverage is state by state.”

Other changes in national policy, he argued, have begun with legislation at the state level, citing women’s suffrage, gay marriage rights and the current push toward legalizing marijuana as

examples.

Massachusetts, Reid noted, already has near-universal health care coverage, and there is growing support in a number of other states for some form of universal, government-sponsored health insurance. Two of the leaders in that movement are Oregon and Reid's home state of Colorado, where he chairs the Colorado Foundation for Universal Health Care.

Health care reform advocates in both states are working toward putting universal health care ballot measures before the voters as early as next year. Reid's hope is that those measures will pass and the idea will spread to neighboring states from there.

"If Colorado does it, then New Mexico and Kansas will have to do it because they can't let us beat them at anything, and if Oregon does it, Washington will do it the next day," he joked.

Then he got serious again.

"I think this will be a faster way to do it than waiting for Congress," he said.