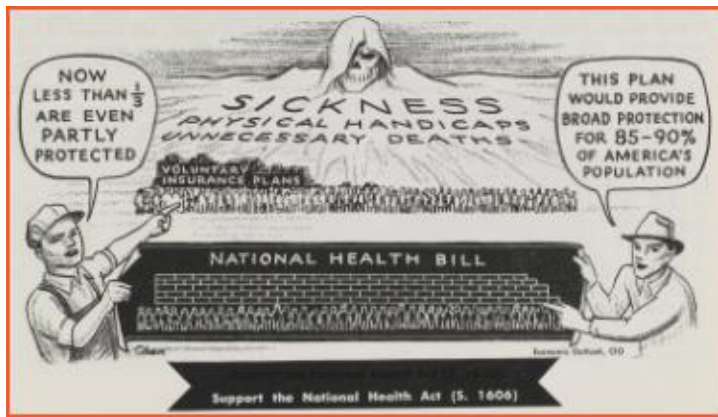


Background Essay on: National Healthcare Challenges of the Presidency



Truman Presidential
Museum & Library



To many Americans, healthcare is considered a human right. In fact, Harry S. Truman, 33rd president of the United States, said, “I put it to you, is it un-American to visit the sick, aid the afflicted or comfort the dying? I thought that was simple Christianity.” Harry Truman would carry on the legacy of FDR in trying to provide American men, women, children and elderly with national healthcare. Truman would pave the way for future presidents such as Lyndon Johnson, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, whose administrations strove toward the same goal.

In 1945, President Truman proposed a national healthcare plan to Congress. In his plan, he outlined five main goals:

1. Address the lack of trained healthcare professionals in all communities.
2. Grow public health services.
3. Increase funding to medical research and education.
4. Lower the cost of individual medical care.
5. Bring attention to the loss of income when severe illness takes hold.

Truman’s plan was that all Americans would pay a certain amount in fees and taxes each month to cover the new healthcare program’s costs. With a Democratic controlled house, Truman’s proposal turned into a bill that would end up as part of the Social Security expansion, but it was quickly shot down as people began to fear an increase in taxes. Some people even feared the program would be a “Communist” act, giving too much control to the federal government. This fear was spread specifically by the American Medical Association (AMA). The bill was also halted by Republican Senator Robert Taft’s Taft-Smith-Ball Bill, which would allow states to make healthcare private. As Republicans regained control of the House in 1946, Truman’s healthcare bill died. Truman considered this a failure of his presidency.

The United States would continue its fight for national healthcare during Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency. Healthcare would be a critical point in Johnson’s “Great Society.” In 1965 in Independence, Missouri, President Johnson signed the Medicare Act of 1965 which would provide healthcare to U.S. citizens age 65 and older. President and Mrs. Truman were present at the signing, and President Johnson dubbed former President Truman “the real daddy of healthcare.” Johnson would also sign a Medicaid bill providing healthcare for low-income Americans.

We would see healthcare come to the forefront again during the Clinton administration. In 1993, President Bill Clinton would launch the Task Force on National Health Care Reform. President Clinton would place his wife and then First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton as the leader of the task force. For multiple reasons including the complexity of the bill, by 1994 the bill was dead and would not be a success.

National healthcare reform would be brought to the forefront again during the Obama Administration. Known as the Affordable Care Act of 2010, this act would require that individuals purchase a health care plan or face a penalty. While this bill was signed, there has been much opposition. The main reason for the opposition of President Obama's bill is that many disagree with a government role and mandates where healthcare is concerned. This is very similar to backlash against President Truman's, Clinton's and even Johnson's bills.

Harry S. Truman paved the way for healthcare reform in the United States, and criticisms against his bill have also remained throughout American history. Many presidents have followed in Truman's footsteps to try to provide what is considered a "universal human right" to all Americans. The question that remains is: What led to Truman's failure of passing a healthcare bill during his presidency?

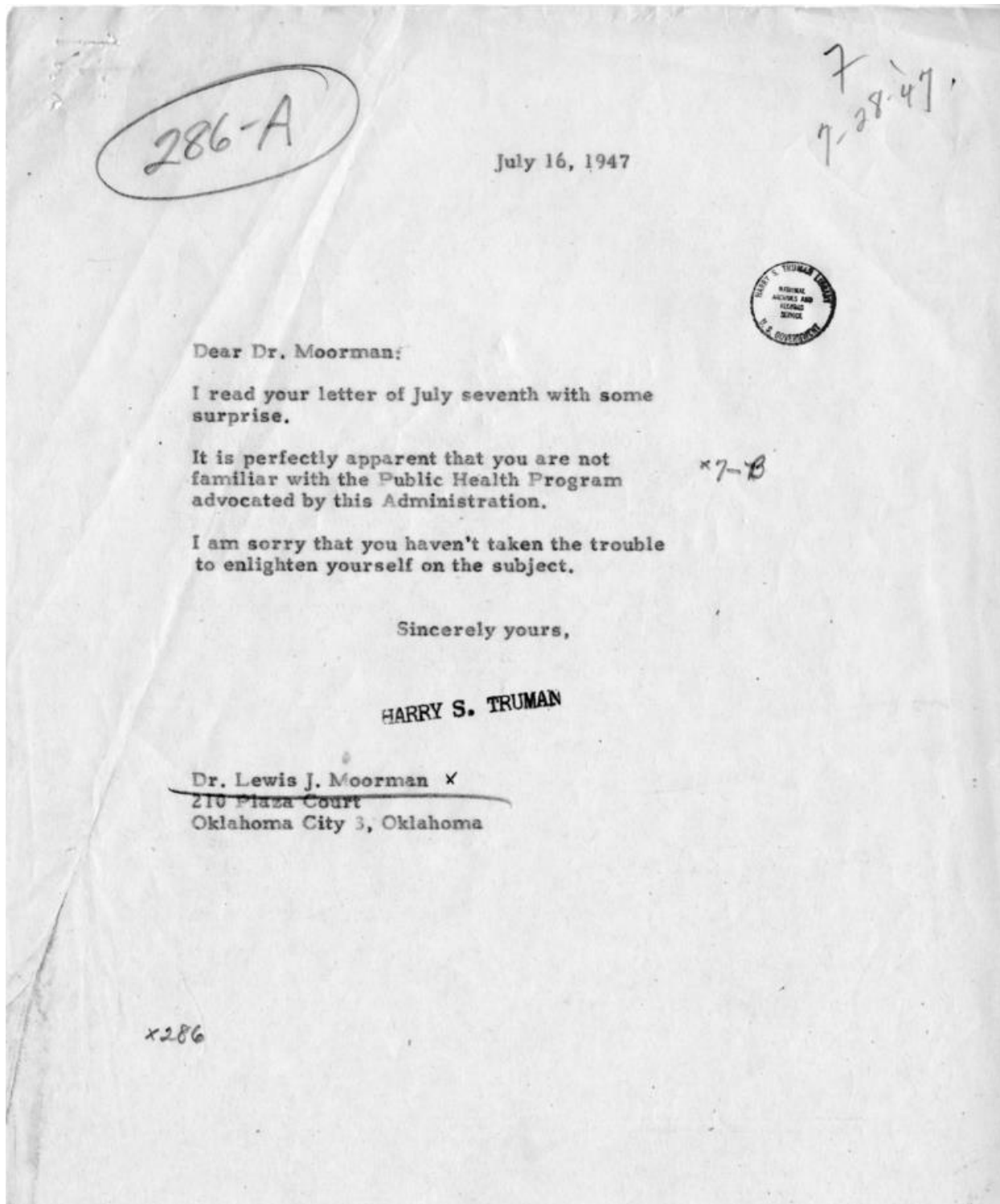
Source 1

President Truman's response

Note: The letter below, written by President Truman, was in response to Dr. Moorman's letter warning about the evils of a national healthcare system. Dr. Lewis J. Moorman wrote a book based on his practice as a midwestern doctor called, *Pioneer Doctor* which was published in 1951.

Source Information: Correspondence Between President Harry S. Truman and Lewis Moorman, July 7, 1947.

Page 1 of 5.



Using Source 1

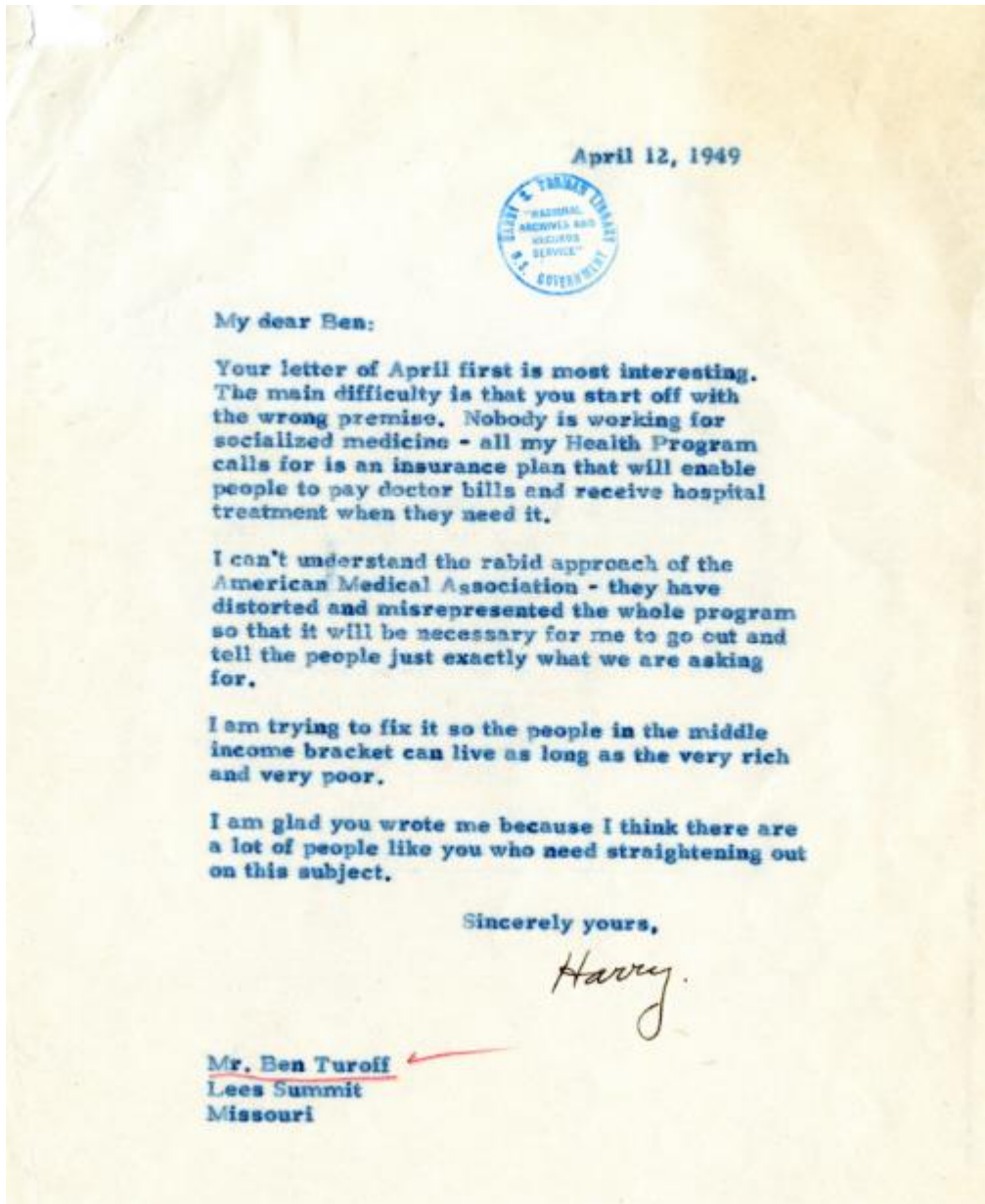
Sourcing	Who was the author of this text? Circle the author. When was the text written? Underline the date.
Contextualization Questions	How might circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?
Corroboration Tasks	How does Truman feel about the individual writing this letter?
Close Reading Questions	How does the document's language indicate the author's perspective?

Source 2

President Truman's letter

Note: The letter below is President Truman's response to a letter written by family friend (from Lee's Summit) Ben Turoff regarding the national healthcare program. Over the years, President Truman and the Turoff family communicated back and forth, even exchanging birthday and Christmas cards. Notice the difference in tone between source 1 and source 2.

Source Information: Letter to Ben Turoff regarding healthcare April 1949.



Glossary

Socialized medicine- the provision of medical and hospital care for all by means of public funds.

Using Source 2

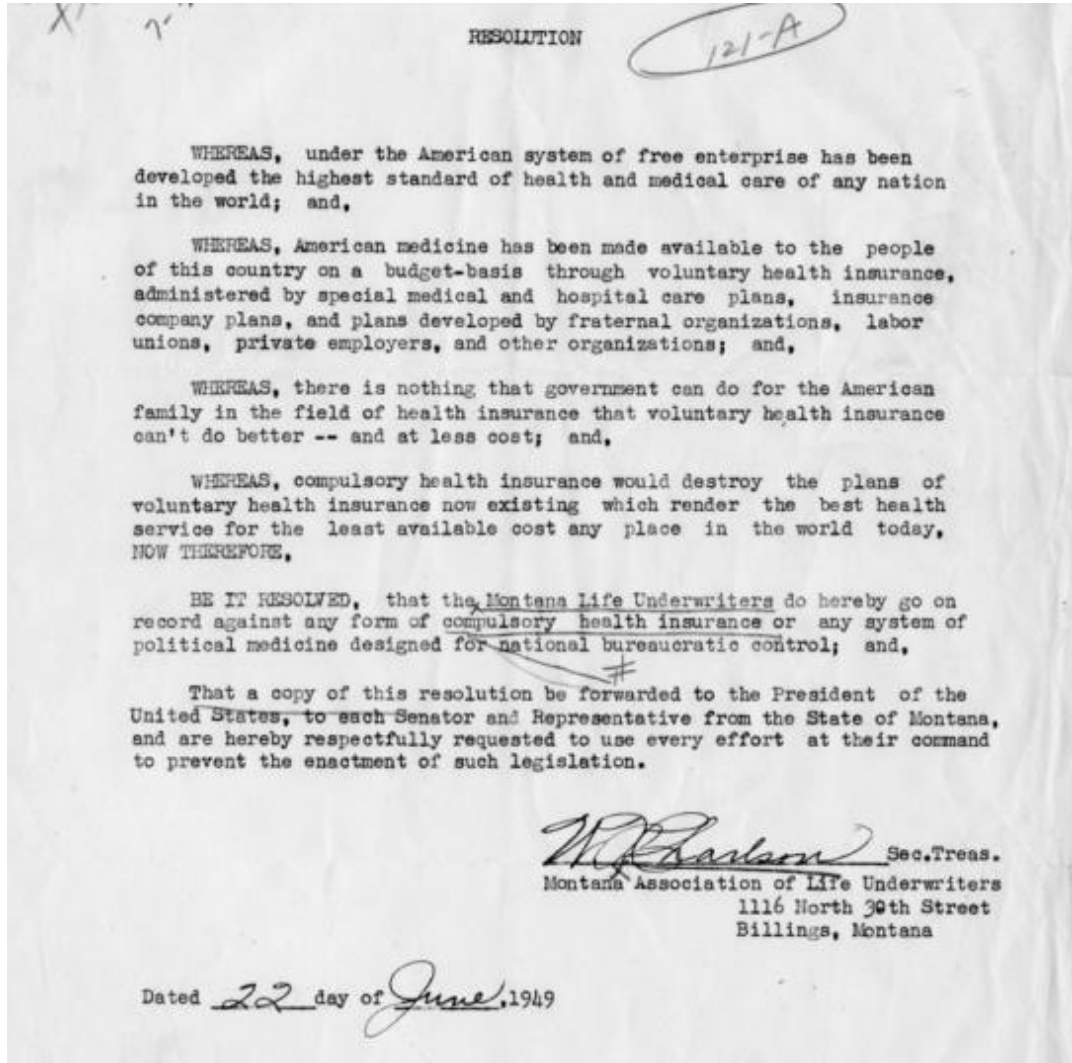
Sourcing	Who was the author of this text? Is he a reliable source? Why or why not?
Contextualization Questions	When and where was the document created?
Corroboration Tasks	What does this document say?
Close Reading Questions	What language does the author use to persuade the document's audience?

Source 3

Letter to President Truman from the MALU

Note: Many professional organizations voiced their opposition to President Truman's proposed National Healthcare Plan.

Source Information: Resolution, Montana Association of Life Underwriters June 22, 1949.



Glossary

Underwriter-is someone whose job is to judge the risks involved in certain activities and decide how much to charge for insurance.

Using Source 3

Sourcing	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Who was the author of the document? (Circle the author's name and who they are.)2. When was the document written? (Underline the date)
Contextualization Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?
Corroboration Tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What makes this document reliable or not?
Close Reading Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What claims does the author make?

Source 4

Cover of “The Road Ahead” by John T. Flynn

Note: John Thomas Flynn (October 25, 1882 – April 13, 1964) was an American journalist best known for his opposition to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and to American entry into World War II. In September 1940, Flynn helped establish the America First Committee (AFC). He was also the first to advance the Pearl Harbor advance-knowledge conspiracy theory. Below is the cover of his book, “The Road Ahead” outlining the evils of a national healthcare system. Flynn thought a national healthcare system would lead to Communism.

Source Information: The Road Ahead: America's Creeping Revolution, 1949 by John T. Flynn



Using Source 4

Sourcing Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify the source and date of the document.2. What is the author's perspective?
Contextualization Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?
Corroboration Tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What other documents have a similar point of view?
Close Reading Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What language does the author use to persuade the document's audience?

Source 5

Socialized Medicine Cartoon

Note: By 1946, many of the professional medical groups and insurance companies in the United States were working hard to stop the passage of President Truman's National Healthcare Plan. Below is one piece of propaganda used to persuade readers.

Source Information: "Still Just as Hard to Swallow." *Showdown on Political Medicine*. Pamphlet. Chicago, IL: National Physicians' Committee for the Extension of Medical Services, 1946, cartoon on back cover page. From National Library of Medicine.



Using Source 5

Sourcing Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Who was the author of the document? (Circle the author's name and who they are.)2. When was the document written? (Underline the date)
Contextualization Questions	This article is an editorial, which expresses the author's opinion. How do you think the author of this cartoon feels about national healthcare?
Corroboration Tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What other documents share a similar perspective with this political cartoon?
Close Reading Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What claim does this author make?2. What language (words, phrases, images, symbols) does the author use to persuade the document's audience?

Source 6

Concise outline of the AMA's argument against President Truman's National Healthcare Proposal

Note: The AMA's long campaign against national health insurance took many forms including images, cartoons, newspaper and magazine space, often including the word "socialism" as a tactic to persuade the public.

Source Information: "A Condensation Prepared by the Bureau of Legal Medicine and Legislation, American Medical Association." April 28, 1949.

Every wage earner, every self-employed person and every employer would be compelled to contribute exorbitant payroll taxes, eventually amounting to a tax of 8 or 10 per cent on every paycheck, to support this system—and the cost of medical care, instead of being reduced, would be doubled and trebled by bureaucratic overhead.

The record is clear in every country where compulsory health insurance has been adopted. It is cheap in quality, but extravagantly high in price.

The President's message, in some respects, was persuasive and disarming. The ideals and objectives were stated in glowing terms, but the message was completely lacking in any specific statement of the services to which the people would be entitled, or any estimate of the taxes which they would be compelled to pay.

Mr. Truman has been too long away from Missouri, if he believes the American people will sign a blank check for such an ambiguous program. The people will want to be shown.

There are many fallacies and misstatements in the President's message, some of which cannot go unchallenged.

President Truman, for example, is about a decade behind the times in his statistics on the growth of the voluntary health insurance systems.

He reports that only 3,500,000 people have insurance which provides adequate health protection. Ten or fifteen years ago that was true. Today, Mr. President, 55,000,000 Americans are protected under the voluntary health insurance systems of this country, against the costs of hospital care, and 37,000,000 policy holders are insured against surgical or medical bills.

Again, the President falls into the error of stating that only limited, inadequate health protection is available under the voluntary health insurance systems. Actually, the voluntary

A Condensation Prepared by the Bureau of Legal Medicine and Legislation, American Medical Association, April 28, 1949

A new administration national health bill, apparently offered as a substitute for S.5, was introduced in the Senate, April 25, as S. 1679, by Senators Thomas of Utah, Murray of Montana, Wagner of New York, Pepper of Florida, Chavez of New Mexico, Taylor of Idaho, McGrath of Rhode Island and Humphrey of Minnesota. The bill was referred to the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, of which Senator Thomas is Chairman.

Similar bills were introduced on the same day in the House of Representatives as H.R.4312 by Representative Dingell of Michigan and H.R.4313 by Representative Biemiller of Wisconsin. The House bills were referred to the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, of which Representative Crosser of Ohio is Chairman.

The title of the bill indicates that it will provide a program of national health insurance, and its proponents describe the program as constituting a national system of contributory health insurance.

There are seven titles to the one hundred and sixty-three page bill.

Prepaid Personal Health Insurance Benefits

This is the heading assigned to Title VII of the bill.

Administration.—On the federal level, there will be created in the Federal Security Agency a National Health Insurance Board of five members, three of whom will be appointed by the President by and with the advice of the Senate. The other two will be the Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service and the Commissioner of Social Security. None of the appointed members, one of whom will be a licensed

Glossary

Condensation- compression of a written or spoken work into more concise form.

Using Source 6

<p>Sourcing Questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Who was the author of the document? (Circle the author's name and who they are.) When was the document written? (Underline the date)
<p>Contextualization Questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?
<p>Corroboration Tasks</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What other documents share a similar perspective with this political cartoon?
<p>Close Reading Questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What claims does the author makes? What evidence does the author use?

Source 7

Note: In 1942, after G. Lloyd Spencer decided not to seek re-election, McClellan ran for the Senate again and this time won. He served as Senator from Arkansas from 1943 to 1977, when he died in office. During his tenure, he served as chairman of the Appropriations Committee and served 22 years as chairman of the Committee on Government Operations. McClellan was the longest serving United States Senator in Arkansas history.

Source Information: McClellan, John L. "Studies, Surveys, Reports, and Proposals. Medical Meeting of County Medical Society Officers." July 1, 1949.

Studies, Surveys, Reports and Proposals

MEDICAL

Meeting of County Medical Society Officers

"Senator John L. McClellan of Arkansas assailed June 5 proposals for compulsory health insurance as 'false doctrine and a hope that is only a delusion.' He addressed the National Conference of County Medical Society Officers on the eve of the opening of the annual meeting of the American Medical Association. 'The title "health insurance" is an attractive and persuasive window dressing,' he said. 'The evil is in the substance of the proposal. Beneath the outer garment is the body of a false doctrine and a hope that is only an illusion. Congress cannot legislate "compulsory" good health for the American people. There are some fields of service, of course, in which the Federal Government can and should properly participate by aiding the medical profession and the public in preventing disease, in carrying on scientific research and experimentation, and also by helping to provide the hospitals and clinical facilities necessary for the care and treatment of those who are ill. Beyond those limits it cannot very well go without invading the inalienable rights of the individual and regimenting the medical profession.'

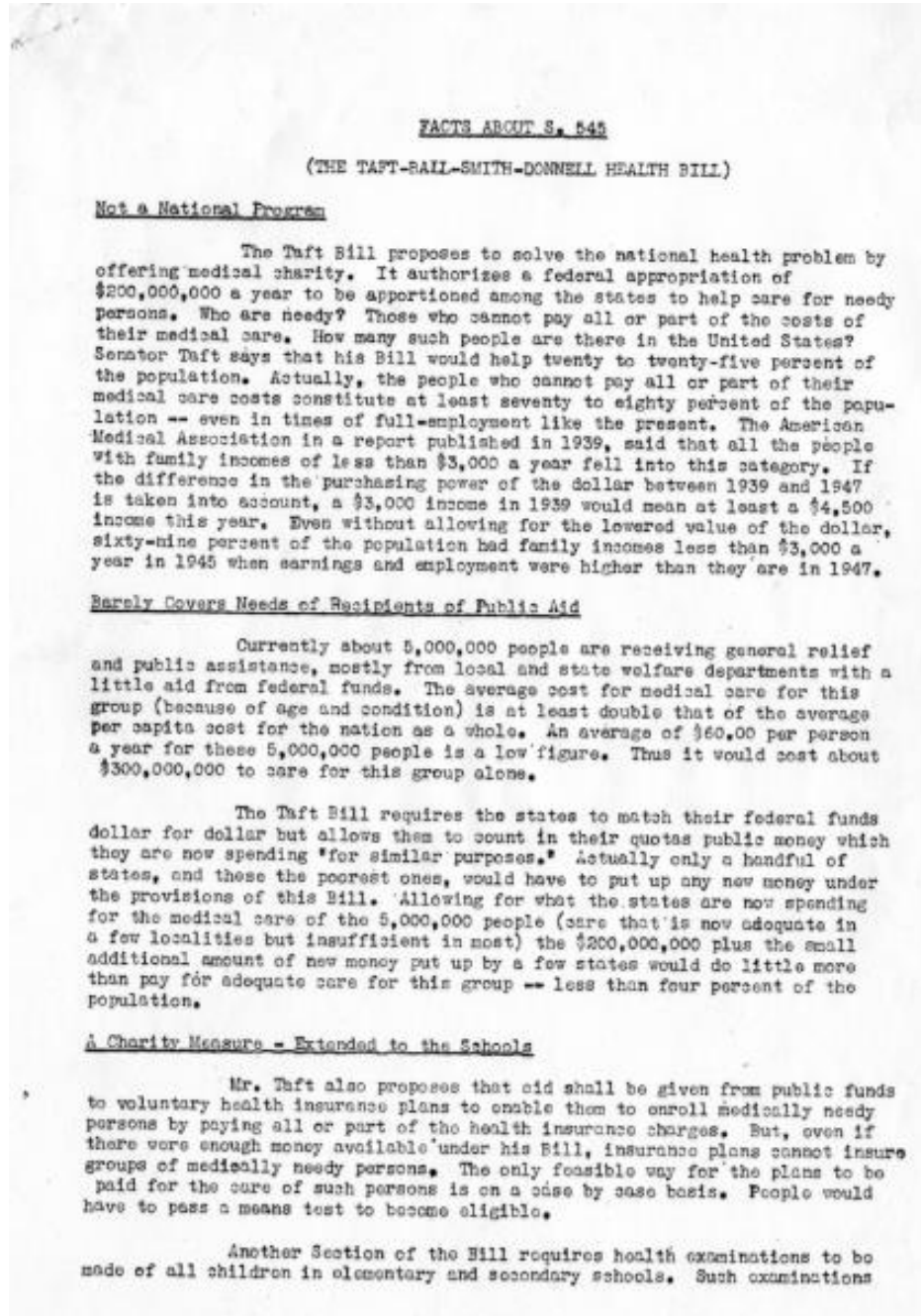
Using Source 7

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Contextualization Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?
Corroboration Tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What other documents have a different perspective with this text?
Close Reading Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What claims does the author make?2. How does the document's language indicate the author's perspective?

Source 8

Notes: Senator Robert Taft (R-OH), introduced the Taft-Smith-Ball bill, which called for matching grants to states to subsidize private health insurance for the needy. Although the AMA supported this bill, Truman was against it because he believed it would halt the political progress he had made in guaranteeing every American health insurance.

Source
Information:
Memorandum,
about S. 545
Taft-Ball-
Donnell Health
CA. 1947.



"Facts
(The
Smith-
Bill)".

for these 30,000,000 children would cost at least \$50,000,000 a year in new money. The expenditure would be largely wasted, however, unless there were also sufficient funds available to pay for the treatment. The Bill says that treatment is to be provided for the children in those families "who could not meet all or part of the cost of their medical care." Thus this Bill would introduce the means test into our public schools. The provision for dental examinations and dental care would do just the same thing.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

A New and Separate Health Agency

A new health agency, independent of the Federal Security Agency, would be established. The Public Health Service and the health functions of the Children's Bureau together with other existing government services would be transferred to it, but would operate there as separate offices under the Administrator. Two new offices, also operating as separate units within the agency would be set up: An Office of Medical and Hospital Care Services and an Office of Dental Care Services.

Professional Control

In each case, the top administrative posts would be occupied by men with professional qualifications rather than trained and experienced public administrators. The Administrator of the health agency must be a physician. The Director of the office of medical care must be a physician with at least five years experience and the Director of dental care a dental surgeon with ten years experience.

Professional control is also assured on the advisory bodies at both the federal and state levels. No provision is made to assure representation of the point of view of the general public. The language of the Bill does not even guarantee minority representation of the beneficiaries or the organizations to which they belong.

Public Health Severely Limited

The Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service would be a subordinate of the top medical administrator and the activities of the Public Health Service segregated from those of the medical and dental care offices. In this way the provisions run directly counter to one of the stated purposes of the Bill and ignores the need for coordination between preventive and curative services and emphasis on prevention as the core of a national health insurance program.

State Administration

States operating health programs would not be required to adhere to any federal standards. The absence of any requirements on the states respecting administration and the failure to even require observance of the merit system would result in inefficient, and perhaps chaotic, administration with no accounting for the expenditure of public funds. It would be quite possible too for a private insurance plan to have exclusive right within a state to administer the benefits.

Using Source 8

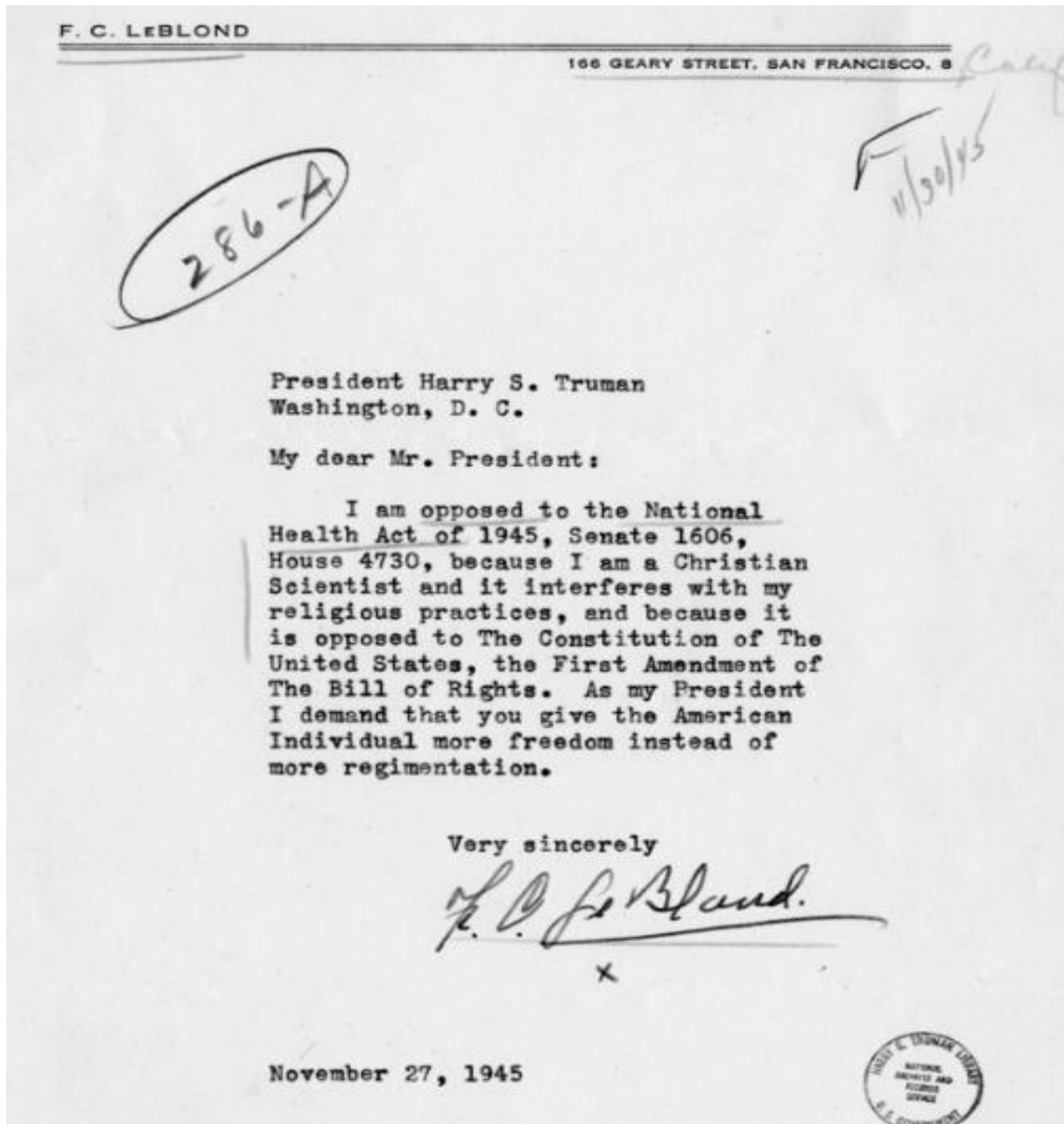
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<p>Corroboration Tasks</p>	<p>What other documents share a similar perspective with this political cartoon?</p>
<p>Close Reading Questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How does the document's language indicate the author's perspective?

Source 9

Letter from citizen against President Truman's Healthcare Plan

Note: President Truman heard from many citizens regarding his proposed National Healthcare Plan. Many, like below, were not in favor.

Source Information: Letter from F. C. LeBlond to President Harry S. Truman. November 27, 1945.



Glossary

Christian Science- the beliefs and practices of the Church of Christ Scientist, a Christian sect founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879. Members hold that only God and the mind have ultimate reality, and that sin and illness are illusions that can be overcome by prayer and faith.

Regimentation-is very strict control over the way a group of people behave or the way something is done.

Using Source 9

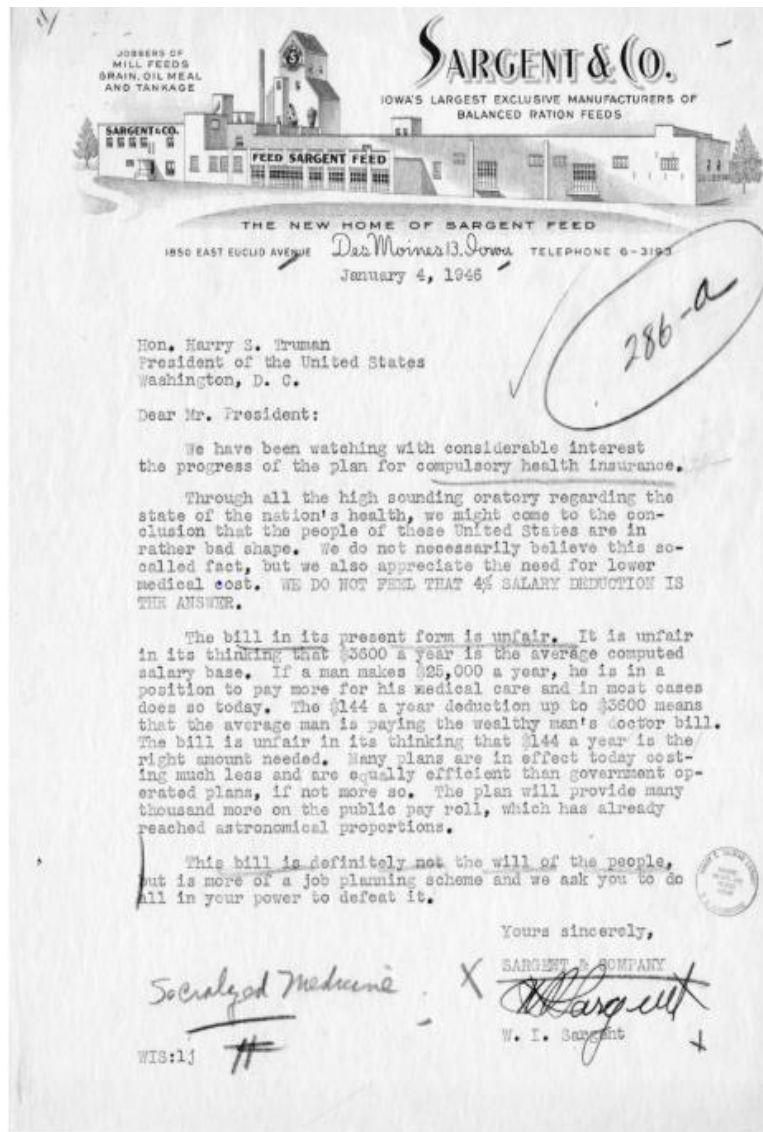
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Close Reading Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What claims does the author make?

Source 10

Letter from small business owner, W.I. Sargent outlining his issues with the President's Healthcare Plan

Note: The most controversial aspect of the plan was the proposed national health insurance plan. In his November 19, 1945 address, President Truman called for the creation of a national health insurance fund to be run by the federal government. This fund would be open to all Americans, but would remain optional. Participants would pay monthly fees into the plan, which would cover the cost of any and all medical expenses that arose in a time of need. The government would pay for the cost of services rendered by any doctor who chose to join the program. In addition, the insurance plan would give a cash balance to the policy holder to replace wages lost due to illness or injury.

Source Information: Letter from W. I. Sargent to President Harry S. Truman, January 4, 1946. Truman Papers, Official File. OF 286-A: Socialized Medicine.



Glossary

Compulsory- required

Using Source 10

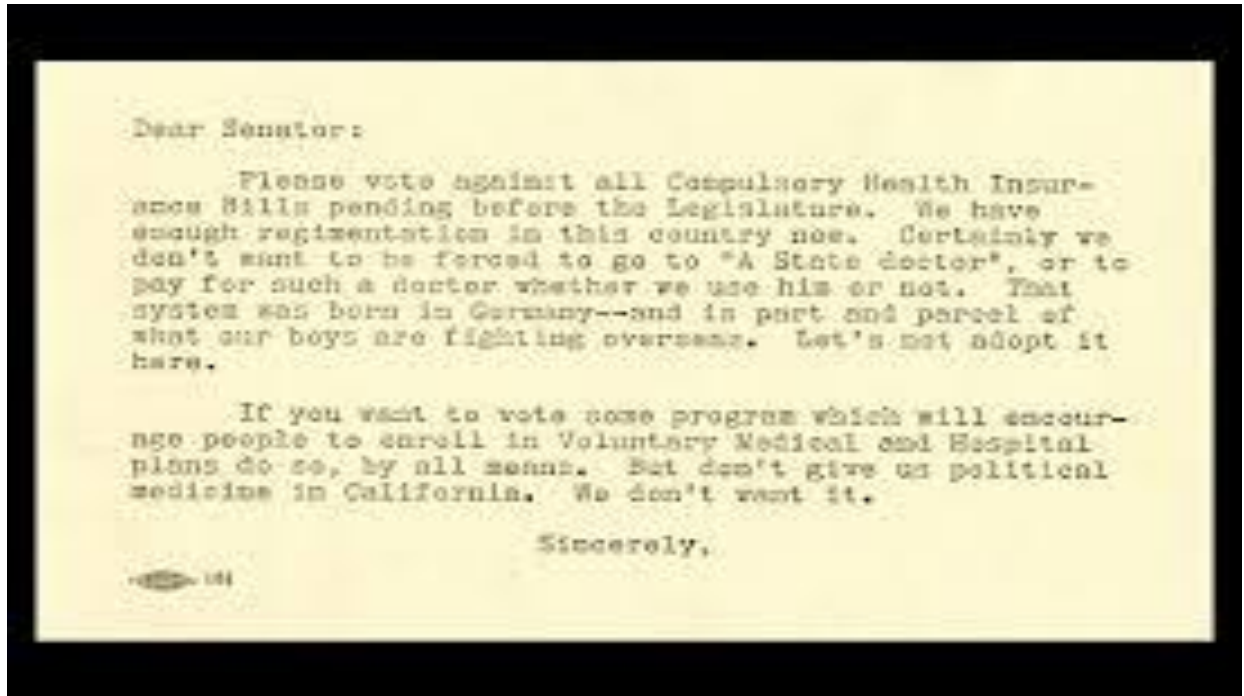
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Corroboration Tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What other documents share a similar perspective with this text?
Close Reading Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What claims does the author make?2. How does the document's language indicate the author's perspective?

Source 11

AMA Postcard to physicians regarding President Truman's Healthcare Plan

Dear Senator:

Please vote against all Compulsory Health Insurance Bills pending before the Legislature. We have enough regimentation in this country now. Certainly we don't want to be forced to go to "A State doctor," or to pay for such a doctor whether we use him or not. That system was born in Germany—and is part and parcel of what our boys are fighting overseas. Let's not adopt it here.



Using Source 11

Sourcing Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Who was the author of the document? (Circle the author's name and who they are.)When was the document written? (Underline the date)
Contextualization Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">How might circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?
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