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?
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.

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**July 16, 1947**

Dear Dr. Moorman:

I read your letter of July seventh with some surprise.

It is perfectly apparent that you are not familiar with the Public Health Program advocated by this Administration.

I am sorry that you haven’t taken the trouble to enlighten yourself on the subject.

Sincerely yours,

HARRY S. TRUMAN

Dr. Lewis J. Moorman

210 Plaza Court

Oklahoma City 3, Oklahoma
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<th><strong>Using Source 1</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sourcing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Corroboration Tasks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Close Reading Questions</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

My dear Ben:

Your letter of April first is most interesting. The main difficulty is that you start off with the wrong premise. Nobody is working for socialized medicine - all my Health Program calls for is an insurance plan that will enable people to pay doctor bills and receive hospital treatment when they need it.

I can’t understand the rabid approach of the American Medical Association - they have distorted and misrepresented the whole program so that it will be necessary for me to go out and tell the people just exactly what we are asking for.

I am trying to fix it so the people in the middle income bracket can live as long as the very rich and very poor.

I am glad you wrote me because I think there are a lot of people like you who need straightening out on this subject.

Sincerely yours,

Harry.

Mr. Ben Turoff
Lee’s Summit
Missouri

Glossary

Socialized medicine- the provision of medical and hospital care for all by means of public funds.
Using Source 2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sourcing</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Close Reading Questions</strong></td>
<td>What language does the author use to persuade the document’s audience?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Letter to President Truman from the MALU

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


WHEREAS, under the American system of free enterprise has been developed the highest standard of health and medical care of any nation in the world; and,

WHEREAS, American medicine has been made available to the people of this country on a budget-basis through voluntary health insurance, administered by special medical and hospital care plans, insurance company plans, and plans developed by fraternal organizations, labor unions, private employers, and other organizations; and,

WHEREAS, there is nothing that government can do for the American family in the field of health insurance that voluntary health insurance can't do better -- and at less cost; and,

WHEREAS, compulsory health insurance would destroy the plans of voluntary health insurance now existing which render the best health service for the least available cost any place in the world today, NOW THEREFORE.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Life Underwriters do hereby go on record against any form of compulsory health insurance or any system of political medicine designed for national bureaucratic control; and,

That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the President of the United States, to each Senator and Representative from the State of Montana, and are hereby respectfully requested to use every effort at their command to prevent the enactment of such legislation.

W. H. Plummer
Sec.Treas.
Montana Association of Life Underwriters
1116 North 30th Street
Billings, Montana

Dated 22 day of June 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                          | 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      | 1. How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content? |
| Corroboration Tasks              | 1. What makes this document reliable or not? |
| Close Reading Questions          | 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 | 1. Identify the source and date of the document.  
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<td>Corroboration Tasks</td>
<td>1. What other documents have a similar point of view?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close Reading Questions</td>
<td>1. What language does the author use to persuade the document’s audience?</td>
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</table>
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.

### Using Source 5

| Sourcing Questions | 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) |
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<tr>
<td>Contextualization Questions</td>
<td>This article is an editorial, which expresses the author’s opinion. How do you think the author of this cartoon feels about national healthcare?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corroboration Tasks</td>
<td>1. What other documents share a similar perspective with this political cartoon?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Close Reading Questions | 1. What claim does this author make?  
2. What language (words, phrases, images, symbols) does the author use to persuade the document’s audience? |
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.


Glossary

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

Using Source 6

| Sourcing Questions                                      | 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                             | 1. How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?  
| Corroboration Tasks                                     | 1. What other documents share a similar perspective with this political cartoon?  
| Close Reading Questions                                  | 1. What claims does the author makes?  
|                                                        | 2. 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.


Using Source 7

| Sourcing Questions | 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 | 1. How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content? |
| Corroboration Tasks | 1. What other documents have a different perspective with this text? |
| Close Reading Questions | 1. What claims does the author make?
|                       | 2. How does the document’s language indicate the author’s perspective? |
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)".
Using Source 8

| **Sourcing Questions** | 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** | 1. How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content? |
| **Corroboration Tasks** | What other documents share a similar perspective with this political cartoon? |
| **Close Reading Questions** | 1. How does the document’s language indicate the author’s perspective? |
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.


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.
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| **Sourcing Questions** | 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** | 1. How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content? |
| **Corroboration Tasks** | 1. What other documents share a similar perspective with this text? |
| **Close Reading Questions** | 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.

Using Source 10

| Sourcing Questions                                                                 | 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                                                      | 1. How might circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?
| Corroboration Tasks                                                              | 1. What other documents share a similar perspective with this text?
| Close Reading Questions                                                          | 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.

If you want to vote some program which will encourage people to enroll in Voluntary Medical and Hospital plans do so, by all means. But don’t give us political medicine in California. We don’t want it.

Sincerely,

Using Source 11

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<td>4. How does the document’s language indicate the author’s perspective?</td>
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**Staging the Question:** Consider the forces that work against a national healthcare system in the United States. Write down the name of each source, and then mark which factor limiting President Truman is present in the document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Lobbyists</th>
<th>Republican Party</th>
<th>Public</th>
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