

Kagen Confronts Angry Crowd at Listening Session

Bob Kiefert, Green Bay Progressive
Health & Lifestyle - Tuesday, September 01, 2009

(Green Bay) - A crowd of 800 filled about three quarters of the auditorium at Southwest High School Monday night for Congressman Dr. Steve Kagen's latest "Listening Session". Dr. Kagen spent nearly two hours trying to explain the real content of the current health care proposals before congress and confront the myths being pushed by right wing opponents of the plans.

Dr. Kagen described his own experiences in the private practice of medicine in Wisconsin and at the VA Hospital and how he used to fight to get his patients the treatments they needed. He said the current health care proposals before congress provided many of the common sense provisions needed to ensure access to adequate health care for everyone, without regard to previous conditions or sickness, and to cut costs. He asked everyone to consider the question "What kind of a country are we" if we would deny our neighbors health care simply to ensure the profits of some? While Dr. Kagen was the only real speaker on the program, most of "questioners" used the opportunity to make statements instead. A flyer with the rather long title "This is NOT the USSR this is AMERICA WE WILL NOT give in to SOCIALISM Stand up for FREEDOM not GOVERNMENT CONTROL" was passed out to the crowd by right wing organizers and served as a script for many of the statements. On the back of the script were 48 statements supposedly referring to 48 pages in the current health care proposals before congress. They ran the usual gamut from "The Health Care Choices Commissioner will decide health benefits for you" to "more payoffs for ACORN". Dr. Kagen listened patiently to the statements, allowing the often red-faced and shouting presenters to blow off steam, and answered the few questions among them. A few people actually asked questions and made positive statements about the health care proposals, including a woman fighting for treatment for a broken leg and the mother of a young war veteran who needed treatment for her son. The hecklers in the crowd tried to shout these people down. Congressman Kagen will continue to try to listen to his constituents at another "Listening Session" at Appleton North High School this Thursday night.