

BlueOregon: Kitzhaber on health care

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This sentence, though, "There was a certain coldness in [Kitzhaber's] attitude towards patients" I don't really understand.

LT - One instance was after a speech to a crowd of over-50, and mainly over-70 health-care reform advocates (ie. falling through the cracks in today's system as their medical needs are increasing, to on Medicare with and without good supplemental insurance). The overwhelming majority were strong supporters of the OHP and had direct memories of the fight to create it and save it in the intervening years, including the bruising battle over the misguided tobaccos tax for funding SCHIP. (Which they knew Kitzhaber initially opposed as divisive and then flipped to support in a tepid way). They lived through and defended against all the fear mongering that the OHP is rationing, but also were quite aware of the problems of denied coverage with the privatization of Medicaid that OHP is. In other words, they knew the reality of what had come before, and I think they were wanting to hear how we were going to move forward to fix the problems in our system.

When Kitzhaber spoke to this group who were his age-cohort, and in real way had been allies in the fight since the 1990's, the room became quite less enthusiastic as he essentially talked about how "they" --- aging people and people who supposedly don't take care of their health whatever way some think they should --- were the big cost to the system and we had to figure out how to minimize the costs "they" imposed on the system. And he used **dying salmon** and his dying mother as examples of how life "just happens". It was almost if everyone had gone through the same extended battle to right wrongs in our system, and he had emerged with very different perceptions and attitude towards those with significant and increasing health care needs, which to varying degrees will eventually be all of us, that this supposedly has been about.

In followup meetings I can only say people were less enthusiastic about Kitzhaber and his Archimede's project too. They couldn't quite forget out if he cared about people as individuals, or just people and the system in the abstract. That may play well with younger people who we know aren't engaged in the health care debate because they still feel relatively invincible, but it just came across as kind of cold and dismissive to people looking at the short end of the genetic lottery, those who maybe hadn't had the most financial success in life with all the "bad" lifestyle choices that come with that, and for whom the years were starting to add up.

I even brought that up generally during the question-and-answer period, and more directly after the speech when he was talking to people individually. He acted like he didn't get the point. (And Kari, I could care less whether you believe anything I say, as with to other factual matter I have dealt with, there is plenty on the public record of Kitzhaber's recent speeches people can review for themselves and see if they feel Kitzhaber seems to increasingly be about seeing those who naturally have increasing medical needs as numbers to be balanced).