

Governor Bill Weld

Margaret Flinter: Welcome to Conversations on Health Care with Mark Masselli and Margaret Flinter, a show where we speak to the top thought leaders in health innovation, health policy, care delivery and the great minds who are shaping the health care of the future. This week Mark and Margaret speak with former Republican Massachusetts' Governor Bill Weld who is running a primary against President Trump in the 2020 election. Governor Weld also served as the assistant U.S. attorney general under President Reagan and says he is mounting the challenge because he believes the country is in "grave danger". He'll talk about his views on health care, climate change, LGBT rights, fiscal responsibility and the need for more cooperation across party lines.

Lori Robertson also checks in, Managing Editor of factcheck.org, looks at misstatements spoken about health policy in the public domain, separating the fake from the facts. We end with a bright idea that's improving health and well-being in everyday lives. If you have comments please e-mail us at chcradio@chc1.com or find us on Facebook, Twitter, iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcast and you can also hear us by asking Alexa to play the program Conversations on Health Care. Now, stay tuned for our interview with Governor Bill Weld on Conversations on Health Care.

Mark Masselli: We're speaking today with former Governor Bill Weld of Massachusetts, long known as a moderate Republican and was the nominee for Vice President on the 2016 Libertarian ticket with Gary Johnson. Governor Weld has rejoined the GOP and is challenging for the Republican nomination for the 2020 Presidential race. Governor Weld served as U.S. Attorney for the State of Massachusetts before being promoted to Assistant U.S. Attorney General under President Reagan. He earned his bachelor's degree and his JD from Harvard. Governor Weld welcome to Conversations on Health Care.

Governor Weld: Mark and Margaret it's a pleasure being with you.

Mark Masselli: You've been described as a maverick, not afraid to challenge the status quo and you were the first Republican to win the Governor seat in the blue state of Massachusetts in decades. You ran for Vice President as a Libertarian in 2016 citing concerns about the direction the GOP was headed in. Now, you're challenging the party infrastructure, a challenge against the incumbent President saying you're doing this because you feel the country is in grave peril. I wonder if you could tell our listeners about your decision to mount a challenge against President Trump and what are the driving forces behind it.

Governor Weld: Well, the driving force is I'd like to do the job. There are a lot of things I don't think are being done in Washington D.C. For example, nobody seems to know how to cut spending \$1. The President has vetoed a single dollar of spending and his latest budget would add another \$7.9

trillion to the accumulated deficit, so it will be up around \$30 trillion. That's simply not fair to the younger generations who are going to have to foot the bill and I think it's hugely irresponsible.

When I was in office, I cut spending year-over-year in absolute dollars and was ranked the most fiscally conservative governor in the United States. Every governor balances her or his budget every year at the state level. The truth is we need a balanced budget amendment to require the federal government to do what all the states do and what every household does which is to balance its checkbook at the end of the month.

Another thing, I want to spend a lot more attention on is climate change. The President has a one word policy for climate change and global warming, which is hoax. Well, it's all very nice and cute to have a one word policy, but it doesn't bespeak deep thought or a research. In terms of peril, I think the President has played fast and loose with North Korea in terms of nuclear weapons and that's just not an area where you want to threaten people and bluster and change your tune all the time. You got to make people understand that no, there's a one way ratchet on nuclear weapons and it's called decommissioning them and ridding the world of nuclear weapons to the extent possible.

Climate change is another. Perhaps the most fundamental is the President's apparent desire to introduce more elements of autocracy into our democracy. He mocks openly the rule of law. He mocks the idea of a free press. I understand little boys want to be the man on the white horse, but that's not the American way. That's also driving me.

Margaret Flinter: Governor Weld, you bring just tremendous experience garnered throughout your career and as a popularly elected Republican in a largely very blue state and you became known for the art of compromise something that we're sorely missing and would like to see return to the national stage if you're going to address these big problems and you called on climate change as one, the budget, but education, health care, our infrastructure, we all think that that's going to require the art of compromise and bipartisanship to make a difference. How do the lessons that you learned in your role as governor factor into what you think you might be able to accomplish on the national stage?

Governor Weld: Well, certainly in office, as governor, I made it my business to reach across the aisle to get things done for the people that we all represent both the executive and the legislature. It was very effective. Within my first month I proposed weekly meetings between myself and my great Lieutenant Governor Paul Cellucci on the one hand and the Democratic Speaker of the House and President of the Senate. We did

that once a week, for two terms. It was such a good idea that it was continued to this day. Charlie Baker who was a two time cabinet member for me is now the governor and he does the same thing. It's just a lot harder to stab somebody in the back or tell the press that somebody is a jerk if you know you're going to be having coffee and doughnuts with them sometime in the next week. When I worked in the federal government, including in the legislature, I worked both for the Senate and for the House. It was before the Bad New Days. People did listen to each other. If somebody was going to give a speech on the Senate floor, the galleries would be packed with people who wanted to hear the speech. Foreign policy, disagreement stopped at the water's edge, but it's just kind of fallen out of a possibility in the last 10 years and we need to get that back.

I don't want to rejoin the party of haters and people who are threatening to punish people. I want to rejoin the party of Abraham Lincoln. That's the Republican Party that I'd like to see in the future.

Mark Masselli:

I'd like to pull the thread on your thoughts about health care and it's really a topic that animates the conversations around kitchen tables all across America. There's still the crushing weight of cost associated with health care access. We hear on the Democratic side that a number, not all of the candidates running are embracing Medicare for all. You've long been a fan of expanding Medicaid often facing some challenges within your own party with that proposition. I'm wondering if you could again share your vision for health policy.

Governor Weld:

Well, first of all, I think the slogan Medicare for All is not going to get the job done because it doesn't pay for anything. It would essentially mean we have a gigantic single payer system and the private health insurance industry would shrivel up and disappear. All that would mean is a gigantic tax increase and it wouldn't do anything to the structure of health care delivery. I'm one of those who says that we should stop arguing about whether we're going to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Clearly, there's not a consensus in Congress. What we should do is try to improve the present system to the extent we can. When you're talking about health care there's always two important imperatives.

One is to make sure that we maintain the quality of health care in the United States, which is by far the best in the entire world and to make sure that the costs are survivable. Once you agree on the goals, then it seems to me there's an opportunity to think of small reforms that could make the situation better. One thing that I really don't particularly care for with the structure of the Affordable Care Act, it's that it's awfully government driven and I would like to see incremental changes made so that more decisions are made between the doctor and the patient and not by the government. In general, my

guiding political philosophy is the most power, the most decision making should be in the hands of the individual. One example of that is I think a woman's right to make decisions about her own body in terms of terminating a pregnancy.

I'd like to see individuals be able to have tax advantage to health savings accounts so that they can decide how much they want to save for health care. It wouldn't be where the government mandates a catalogue for everybody. The cost of the Affordable Care Act is driven in part by the fact that it presupposes that everybody wants to pay for and undergo the cost of an enormous array of programs to make sure that no matter what happens they're always going to have access to the most expensive procedures available and some people buy with a high deductible, because they know the insurance is going to be cheaper that way.

Other people say, no, I can't afford to do that. I've got to have dollar-one coverage and people can make those decisions for themselves. People aren't stupid. I think people should be able to buy insurance, including health insurance across state lines. I think they should be able to purchase prescription drugs whose cost is a national scandal right now wherever they want to find them. If there's cheaper prescription drugs in Canada, let them purchase the prescription drugs in Canada because a lot of the elderly in particular are being priced out of the market by the cost of prescription drugs.

Margaret Flinter: Something else I think you've been really clear about in your career is your advocacy for groups who often don't get due attention. You've long advocated for the rights of the LGBTQ community. I know you've been a great advocate for strengthening protection for victims of domestic violence and also for addressing the inequities that impact minority communities. Maybe you share with us some of the policies or positions that you would seek to better support these and other underserved or discriminated against populations?

Governor Weld: I consider that the essence of a democracy is the idea that the individual shall never be thrust in a corner by government and there's a reason for that. If anybody has to live in the shadows as it were, that weakens the bonds that keep us together as a nation. They weaken the bonds of society. When I was running for office I met a good number of gay and lesbian people who told me about their lives living in the shadows, fearing the police, living in underground, going to underground bars where nobody else would come and just this idea of fear.

So, you're right, I was very open about gay and lesbian civil rights. I appointed the woman who wrote the opinion holding that gay marriage was constitutionally required under the equal protection and due process clauses, and that opinion that went to the Supreme

Court and was the basis for the change nationally. When I came into office, I went right to the Hispanic community, the Asian community and the black community, communities of color and said, "I want to have a Hispanic-American commission. I want to have an Asian-American commission, I want to have African-Caribbean-American commission." I appointed very prominent individuals to a commission of maybe 30 members apiece. I would meet with them once a month and say, "What can I do?" My chief of staff and my chief revenue officer were a gay couple whose marriage I participated in. My cabinet consisted of eight women and three men and always included minorities. Everybody had this sense that everybody was welcome and I think that's one of the functions of government. I would say the current incumbents in Washington D.C. and the Oval Office doesn't seem to share that view.

I recall the days of President Reagan who I served for seven years. He wanted to make everybody feel good about being an American and he largely succeeded in that. I've been a trial lawyer so I saw cases where a woman would come in to court Monday morning, all black and blue and say, my boyfriend or my husband beat the tar out of me over the weekend. The judge will say, well, lean down and say, what did you do to irritate your boyfriend or your husband? It's just unthinkable. I appointed the first victim witness coordinator so the victims would be heard and made all the judges take instruction in how to treat these cases. I recognize the defense of a battered women's syndrome and actually commuted the sentences of eight women who had been convicted of manslaughter for in self-defense, killing their husband or boyfriend who's advancing on them with a knife. That was another victim class that I thought deserved to be called out and get recognition.

Mark Masselli:

We're speaking today with Governor Bill Weld, former two term governor of the state of Massachusetts and a 2016 candidate for Vice President on the Libertarian ticket. Governor Weld has mounted in committee to challenge President Trump for the Republican nomination in the 2020 Presidential Race. Governor Weld let's talk about climate change. It's still hard to believe that there are people who are battling the science. You've recently stated that you would hope most Republicans could at least get behind the idea that we all should have access to clean air and clean water. That sort of seems small in the context of the legacy of a party of conservation and you go back to President Grant who created Yellowstone National Park. You've got President Nixon who created the EPA. I'm wondering if you could talk a little more about the climate change debate.

Governor Weld:

Sure. There's one more eminent Republican who should be added to that list Teddy Roosevelt who spent a lot of time camping out at Yosemite. Next thing you know, we had a National Park System, but I

think that Europe has its monuments and its cathedrals. We have our mountains and our valleys and our rivers and streams and we damn well better protect them. I often say up in New Hampshire, how do you like to have the White Mountains with no snow, because that's what's going to happen if nothing is done about global warming and climate change. When the polar ice cap goes it's going to have enormous consequences, not only to sustain life itself, but also all of our coastlines are going to be totally reconstructed.

There's going to be a lot of short front property that's right now 10 or 15 miles inland and it's not all that far away, but it's possible to plan ahead for these things and that's what we have to do. We have to plan ahead as opposed to saying hoax, hoax, hoax and putting our blinder over our eyes and say, there's nothing that can be done about this. One action I would take right away is to rejoin the Paris climate accords and we have to adopt targets for 2050 in terms of CO2 emissions that are consistent with what other industrialized nations have done. It just won't do for a country as big and important as the United States to say, oh, everyone else can go solve this problem. We're going to stick our head in the sand and ignore it. That's exactly what the present administration is doing. To the extent that they claim lots of credit for deregulation in Washington.

I look at where the emphasis has been. It's been on deregulations in the environmental area and it seems to be aimed at clean air and clean water. I can't understand why people don't see that we've got to pull together on climate change.

Margaret Flinter: Well, Governor another on this somewhat long list of life and death issues that we face as a society is certainly education and access to education. I know that's been a critically important issue to you in your life and career. I've read that your own family is eight generations of Harvard graduates I think if I've ---

Governor Weld: Couldn't get in anywhere else.

Margaret Flinter: Well, that's great but you know education is so important to all of us. We're very focused both on training the next generation of health care professionals, but also really looking around our communities and saying what can we do to advance the education of our community members who need to advance in education training if they're going to participate fully in our society and yet the cost of higher education, even within states, even within our public universities is very challenging for many people. What are your thoughts about how we make education more available to people, to the benefit of our whole society?

Governor Weld: Well, lifelong learning is an idea whose time has long since arrived and it ain't a luxury anymore. It's an absolute necessity. Even 15 years

ago when I was talking to graduating seniors from high school I would say, look you are going to have not only seven different jobs in your life, you are going to have seven different careers, so you better take enough of liberal arts to be supple enough to change from one to the other because you don't know what that next career is going to be. I look at the displacement that's just about to occur in the next 15 years as a result of advances in technology, artificial intelligence, drones, robotics, machine learning, autonomous, that's to say self-driving vehicles. They're going to rearrange 15% to 20% of the jobs that currently exist in the United States.

Think of someone who's a long haul trucker. You've got automated self-driving vehicles, and that job is no longer going to exist. There will be replacement jobs. They're going to require technical skills and those skills are roughly equivalent to the first two years of post-secondary education post high school. That's the community college level. I think we could very easily provide for those workers who are going to be displaced. In 2016, they would have been called Trump voters, right, but I don't see the current administration doing anything to get out in front of what's going to happen. I think we could very easily put something together, a partnership between the federal government and the states so that those displaced workers could go free to a community college or the equivalent and acquire those skill sets so they could get the replacement jobs.

I think of this as the future of work, but it's really the future of work and education and I think we should put a lot more emphasis and encourage and even have the government encourage online courses and that could be very valuable. A lot of people can't afford to take two years off to go do that. I think that's part of the wave of the future as well. At the college level, we've now got a federal law that says students can't re-negotiate their student debt. It's unthinkable to me. That's got to be repealed right away. One more thing we shouldn't lose sight of K through 12 either. I think possibly the thing I'm proudest of that I did as Governor was I entered into a grand bargain with the Democrats in the legislature and the Teacher's Union and we agreed to put more money into K through 12.

In return, I required what are called management givebacks in other words accountability and standards. We put in high stakes tests for kids in fourth, eighth and tenth grade. If you don't pass the test, you don't go onto the next grade. No more you get to 12th grade and Johnny [PH] still can't read and doesn't know anything about math, but he gets a sheepskin, he's sent off to community college where he still can't read or do math. The community college has to send him into remedial programs there and that's not good for the community college. It's not really good for Johnny. But until we passed that and had those requirements Massachusetts was like 26, 27 out of the 50

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states in terms of academic performance. Since we did that for 25 years in a row Massachusetts has been number one in the country in both reading and math. That's something that can be done in the education area that's just going to benefit everybody.

Mark Masselli: Governor Weld, what are the challenges you would face if elected President would be dealing with the divisions that exist in the country? Some analysts have said that we're the most divided since the civil war as a country. I'm wondering what steps can people take that might bring them to listen to each other, and the political side how would you really try to bring about better civil discourse?

Governor Weld: Well, I was President I would try to do what I did as Governor, which is to reach out to everybody and make sure that we're unleashing the energies of everyone treating everyone with respect. That's not done by this administration. They start with immigration. They want to scare people. Mr. Trump has said many times the most important thing is to instill fear. Steve Bannon who is his chief campaign architect, has said, "if Trump is reelected, it will be Trump unchanged." Essentially, he's saying no one will be safe. It's not a coincidence that the title of Bob Woodward's book about Mr. Trump is Fear. Right from the beginning this administration has tried to scare us into thinking that we're all under siege by every other country, but our own. I see the danger as being quite different. I see it as being autocracy and the erosion of democracy.

I don't think it's any secret strategy of the Trump campaign and of Mr. Trump's administration is to divide people, stir up the pot and get everybody's teeth on edge. Even the kind of outreach and it may seem trivial, but these commissions of Hispanics and Asians and African-Americans, Caribbean Americans, it may seem like a small thing, but I don't know. They went back to their communities and said, hey, this guy's really listening. It really takes two things. Cooperation across the political aisle is important, but showing that you want to have America United, showing that you care about the word United in the United States of America that's probably the most important thing of all.

Margaret Flinter: We've been speaking today with Governor Bill Weld, former two term Governor of the State of Massachusetts. He has mounted committee to challenge president Trump for the Republican nomination in the upcoming Presidential Race. You can learn more about his work and his vision for 2020 and beyond by going to weld2020.org or follow him on Twitter @GovBillWeld. Governor Weld thank you so much for your commitment to public service and for sharing your thoughts on critical issues facing the country today on Conversations on Health Care.

Governor Weld: Thank you so much Margaret and Mark.

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Mark Masselli: Thank you so much.

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Mark Masselli: At Conversations on Health Care we want our audience to be truly in the know when it comes to the facts about health care reform and policy. Lori Robertson is an award winning journalist and managing editor of factcheck.org, a nonpartisan, nonprofit consumer advocate for voters that aim to reduce the level of deception in U.S. politics. Lori, what have you got for us this week?

Lori Robertson: How has the number of people without health insurance changed under President Donald Trump? The latest report from the National Health Interview Survey shows an increase in the uninsured of about 1.1 million as of the first nine months of 2018 compared with 2016. 9.2% of the population lacked coverage during the period up from 9% in 2016. A much greater rise was reported by a Gallup survey covering the final quarter of 2018. Gallup put the rise in uninsured adults at about 7 million compared with the last half of 2016. Gallup found the percentage of uninsured adults was 13.7% in the October through December quarter. Besides the differing time periods Gallup covers only adults age 18 and over while the NHIS covers all ages including children.

NHIS said the 1.1 million increase it found was not statistically significant but taken together both surveys point to an upward trend that seems to have accelerated during the latter part of 2018. President Trump failed to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act as he promised to do, but he did reduce advertising and outreach aimed at enrolling people in ACA insurance plans. In December 2017, he signed a tax bill that ended the ACA's tax penalty for people who failed to obtain coverage. In March, the Trump administration joined an effort by GOP state attorneys general seeking a court decision to overturn the entire act.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that with the end of the mandate penalty 3 million people will drop or lose coverage this year and another 2 million in 2020 and that's my factcheck for this week. I'm Lori Robertson, managing editor of factcheck.org.

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Margaret Flinter: Factcheck.org is committed to factual accuracy from the country's major political players and is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. If you have a fact that you'd like checked, e-mail us at www.chcradio.com, we'll have factcheck.org's Lori Robertson check it out for you here on Conversations on Health Care.

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Mark Masselli: Each week Conversations highlights a bright idea about how to make wellness a part of our communities and everyday lives. When Leanne Brown was a graduate student in nutritional science at NYU, she came to understand the enormous challenges of eating healthy foods while doing field work with some of New York city's more impoverished populations. When it came time to do her thesis, she thought, why not write a cookbook of health recipes aimed at the millions of Americans living on food stamps or SNAP stipends of \$4 a day.

Leanne Brown: \$4 a day is sort of the general rule of thumb for around how much a person who is qualifying for food stamps would have to eat per day. We felt like that was more useful sort of explanation, a way of saying this is a SNAP cookbook without actually saying it in so many words.

Mark Masselli: She learned that the lack of access to nutritious food was also contributing to obesity and poor health in many of these families, so she crafted Good and Cheap. A cookbook aimed at not only teaching these families how to shop for affordable produce and healthy foods, but how to get an entire family to cook in a more healthy way.

Leanne Brown: I really wanted to arm people with the ability to walk into a grocery store and say like, okay, this is my sale. I can totally make something delicious out of that. I know how to do that and you know, that's not the easiest thing to be able to do. For a lot of people you go this is the recipe I have, this is my list of ingredients I better go and carefully shop for each of those. But that doesn't allow you to sort of find the deals and find the value in order to really get a buy-on on such a small amount of money. You need to be able to be adaptable.

Mark Masselli: Her thesis was so well received. She launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise enough money to make the book available at Soup Kitchens, women's shelters and community health centers. For every copy she sells, she gives one free copy to a school, a health center or an organization that request it.

Leanne Brown: We can't give these books away completely free but the idea is that this is a cookbook that needs to be put into the hands of someone who really can't afford the cookbook. That's where the idea of doing a buy one get one like TOMS shoes came from. What sort of like there are people out there who are really excited about this issue and have money to spend on it and who can appreciate that if they can sort of help to subsidize those who can't.

Mark Masselli: Well, a new version of her book comes out in June. She's made her book available as a free pdf download to anyone who wants it and thousands of people have already done so Good and Cheap, a cookbook aimed at the food stamp population or anyone else on fixed

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income for that matter, teaching them how to shop for healthy produce and making that healthier choice into delicious meals, helping to positively influence their diets, obesity and well-being. Now, that's a bright idea.

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Mark Masselli: You've been listening to Conversations on Health Care. I'm Mark Masselli.

Margaret Flinter: I'm Margaret Flinter.

Mark Masselli: Peace and health.

Female: Conversations on Health Care is recorded at WESU at Wesleyan University, streaming live at www.chcradio.com, iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcasts. If you have comments, please e-mail us at chcradio@chc1.com, or find us on Facebook or Twitter. We love hearing from you. This show is brought to you by the Community Health Center.

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