

The ARCHIMEDES MOVEMENT

What Is The Archimedes Movement?

The Archimedes Movement is committed to building meaningful opportunities for engagement and direct action to advance solutions to the common challenges we face. The first challenge we will tackle is the growing crisis in our health care system.

This movement grew out of the fact that programs on which we rely to finance and deliver health care in America were created in response to the circumstances of 50 or 60 years ago while economic and demographic environment in which these programs exist has changed dramatically since that time. As a consequence, not only do these programs reflect contradictory and inequitable policies, in many cases they are no longer effective in solving the very problems they were originally created to address.

The challenge of upgrading this outdated “operating system” to reflect the realities of today is complicated by the fact that our politics have become largely transactional - “lower my taxes and I will vote for you;” “give me prescription drug coverage and I will vote for you.” And it works the other way around as well - “vote for me and I will cut your taxes;” “vote for me and I will fund schools first.” The problem is that these transactions are all about “me” - and have nothing to do with “us.” They are all about what I can get, not what I can give. They neither foster a sense of the larger public interest; nor do they do advance the common good.

The Archimedes Movement is based on the recognition that we cannot effectively meet the challenges we face through this kind of transactional politics because they erode any sense of common purpose and foster the belief that if we can just elect a new governor; a different legislature; a different congress or a new president - all our problems will be resolved.

In reality, however, these problems cannot be solved without taking some risks and making some sacrifices, which means they will not be solved by relying solely on a political process which is set up to reward people who play it safe - who ask at every decision point “which transaction offers the safest path to retain my position?”

The problems we face are about us and they cannot be solved unless we do it together. Unless the people themselves can agree on a broad vision for what they want their health care system to look like; on the values they want it to reflect and the outcomes they want it to produce — the political process cannot and will not do it for them.

The Archimedes Movement, by creating opportunities for community engagement, will provide a vehicle through which the growing concern over the U.S. health care system can be channeled into effective action - not only in creating the vision for a more equitable and sustainable system — but also in building the tension necessary for the realization of that vision.

The Archimedes Movement was established at The Foundation For Medical Excellence in January 2006 under the leadership and direction of former Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, MD.

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