

# Thousands of downtown D.C. protesters blast Obama Associated Press

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WASHINGTON – Tens of thousands of protesters fed up with government spending marched to the U.S. Capitol on Saturday, showing their disdain for the president's health care plan with slogans such as "Obamacare makes me sick" and "I'm not your ATM."

The line of protesters clogged several blocks near the Capitol, according to the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. Demonstrators chanted "enough, enough" and "We the People." Others yelled "You lie, you lie!" and "Pelosi has to go," referring to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

Throngs of people waved U.S. flags and held signs reading "Go Green Recycle Congress" and "Obama Bin Lyin.'" Men wore colonial costumes as they listened to speakers who warned of "judgment day" — Election Day 2010.

Other signs — reflecting the growing intensity of the health care debate — depicted President Barack Obama with the signature mustache of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler. Many referred to Obama as a socialist or communist, and another imposed his face on that of the villainous Joker from "Batman."

Richard Brigle, 57, a Vietnam War veteran and former Teamster, came from Paw Paw, Mich. He said health care needs to be reformed — but not according to Obama's plan.

"My grandkids are going to be paying for this. It's going to cost too much money that we don't have," he said while marching, bracing himself with a wooden cane as he walked.

FreedomWorks Foundation, a conservative organization led by former House Majority Leader Dick Armey, organized several groups from across the country for what they billed as a "March on Washington."

Organizers say they built on momentum from the April "tea party" demonstrations held nationwide to protest tax policies, along with growing resentment over the economic stimulus packages and bank bailouts.

Armey and other speakers directed their ire at Pelosi — Armey took a photo, telling the crowd he wanted to be able to prove to her they were there.

"If it's necessary, we'll come back here next year," he said.

Many protesters said they paid their own way to the event — an ethic they believe should be applied to the government. They say unchecked spending on things like a government-run health insurance option could increase inflation and lead to economic ruin.

Terri Hall, 45, of Starke, Fla., said she felt compelled to become political for the first time this year because she was upset by government spending.

"Our government has lost sight of the powers they were granted," she said. She added that deficit spending is out of control, and said she thought it was putting the country at risk.

Race also became an issue when a black Republican leader denounced African-American politicians that she said had an "affinity" for socialism.

"I'm outraged prominent black politicians use the race card" to cover up their failed policies, said Deneen Borelli of New York.

One woman held a sign with images of Martin Luther King Jr. and Obama, with the words printed alongside: "He had a dream, we got a nightmare."

Lawmakers also supported the rally. Rep. Mike Pence, chairman of the House Republican Conference, said Americans want health care reform but they don't want a government takeover.

"Republicans, Democrats and independents are stepping up and demanding we put our fiscal house in order," Pence, of Indiana, told The Associated Press.

"I think the overriding message after years of borrowing, spending and bailouts is enough is enough," Pence said.

Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., and Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., also spoke at the rally.

Other sponsors of the event include the Heartland Institute, Americans for Tax Reform and the Ayn Rand Center for Individuals Rights.

Connie Castleton, 52, of Irving, Texas, said she drove 20 hours from her home to attend the rally. The nurse said she's motivated to try and get others involved in opposing Obama's health care plan.

"There's a lot more people mad about what's going on than I thought," she said.

Several protesters said they represented a "silent majority" or referred to themselves as "community organizers" — a phrase often associated with the president.

"This isn't some right-wing conservative agenda," said 30-year-old Adam Moore of Rochester, Mich. "This is a true grass-roots movement."

Erica Coyle, who's in her 50s and is from Louisville, Ky., said problems began before Obama took office, but she said the situation has worsened and people are "finally waking up."

"This is his Waterloo," Coyle said of Obama.

