



Sierra Sacramento Valley Medicine

Vol. 60 / No. 5 - Sep / Oct 2009

Ami Bera, MD, (D) Congressional District 3



By Ami Bera, MD

Dr. Bera responded to the SSVMS questions with the following statement.

In April 2009, I became a candidate to represent my district, our state and our nation in California's 3rd District in the United States Congress.

This decision was not taken lightly, and was only arrived at after months of contemplation, discussion with friends, family members and colleagues. My motivation in running for Congress reflects the reason most of us enter the medical profession — a desire to serve and a desire to heal.

I am the beneficiary of the American dream. My parents immigrated to California in the 1950s and, through opportunity and hard work, were able to provide stability and security for themselves and my two older brothers and me. I benefited from strong public schools, communities where neighbors watched out for one another and a University of California system that allowed me to complete my undergraduate and medical training with minimal debt.

My wife, Dr. Janine Bera, and I were able to find secure jobs and careers, buy an affordable home and build a family together. Yet, I worry about the future we will leave our daughter. As I talk to my neighbors and future constituents, most share this same concern.

I have been blessed to work in many aspects of our health care community: as a practicing physician for MedClinic (now Mercy) Medical Group; as medical director for Care Management for the five hospital Mercy Healthcare Sacramento system; as Sacramento County's chief medical officer and medical director and most recently as associate dean for admissions at the University of California, Davis School of Medicine. Outside of health care, I have been involved in addressing our community's social and economic challenges, leading and facilitating discussions on the homeless; affordable housing; distribution of limited social resources and recreating a viable and accessible system of education. It is these varied experiences that provide the foundation upon which I now run for Congress.

As physicians, we must take a leadership role in changing the tone of divisive dialogue concerning health care redesign. We are given the privilege each day of patients and families sharing their struggles and joys with us and seeking our guidance and help in restoring their lives. We are trained to address these issues in a compassionate and empathetic manner, but we are also trained to address these challenges with direct, honest and authentic

conversation.

We do not have the luxury of avoiding the difficult conversation. We must name the challenge, discuss it openly and find a workable solution to serve those seeking our guidance. This is exactly how we were trained. And this is exactly what is missing in our political leadership today.

The core planks of my campaign are as follows:

We must build a health care system that has a compassionate baseline that is available and accessible for every American.

Second, we must rebuild our educational system to teach students to think and make sure it's flexible enough to allow for many career paths, from trades, to technology, to college.

Third, we must create an economy that rewards employment and creates career pathways that allow for a secure and sustainable future over a lifetime. And last, we must have an environmental and energy policy that builds for generations to come.

I encourage you to visit our website, www.BeraForCongress.com, or come to one of our community chats. You can get involved in the campaign by making a donation, hosting a house party, helping with a voter registration canvass or in a variety of other ways.

Be well.