


DAVID PLOUFFE POINTS TO EVENTS IN NOVEMBER TO PROVE “BASE” IS HAPPY IN DECEMBER

David Plouffe fed Ari Melber a whole bunch of bullshit in this interview defending Obama’s health care reform capitulation. But I’m particularly amused by this aspect of his argument. 

Rank and file Obama supporters still have faith in the health care strategy, Plouffe insists, a conclusion he reached by listening to the “base” supporters who donated time and money to Obama.

“I’ve been out on a book tour, I’ve seen a lot of people—the base I view are the people who gave money and volunteered in the campaign. Now, there are plenty of people who are commentators who did that too, and I thank them for that, but the heartbeat of the campaign and the Obama organization are the people out there I’ve seen the past few weeks in St Louis, in Kansas City, in Philadelphia,” he said. (*The Nation* interview was part of Plouffe’s tour for “The Audacity to Win.” Plouffe also highlighted that literally two million people have taken some volunteer action for health care since Obama’s inauguration.

“It’s easy to take potshots, but I’m very closely in contact with the people who make up the heartbeat of the ground level of Obama for America, who are still out there,” he said. “We’ve had a couple million people out there volunteering for health care, quietly in communities, helping maintain support.

It's different from a campaign; you're not out there saying, 'Register eight voters today.'" Later he elaborated, "Is it the same intensity as the campaign? Of course not... I quite frankly am thrilled that over two million people, which is a lot, have done something on health care, meaning: they've gone out and knocked on doors; they visited a congressional office; they helped organize a press conference. It's happened in all 50 states, and we think it's a small part of why health care will get done."

So Plouffe refutes Markos' argument that the party has "a lack of understanding of just how pissed the base is at this so-called reform," by pointing to two things: the enthusiasm of the people he's talked to while on book tour over "the past few weeks," and the two million people who have been engaging in grassroots lobbying through Organizing for America.

As a threshold matter, Plouffe invokes book events that happened on November 20, November 19, and November 5 to support his claim that grassroots Obama supporters are not pissed about Obama's capitulation to Joe Lieberman on December 14. But it's worse than that. Plouffe hasn't had a book event since December 10 (though he's doing one tomorrow in Delaware, and I hear he takes feedback he gets at book events very seriously, if you happen to be in Delaware...). In other words, Plouffe is claiming that all the enthusiasm he saw on the road before Obama capitulated to Lieberman proves that the base is okay that Obama capitulated to Lieberman.

Then there's the OFA claim. Plouffe says that the sheer number of Obama volunteers who have been fighting to support health care reform prove that the base still supports Obama's approach to health care reform.

There's a big problem with that. Though OFA did

send out an activist blast yesterday, for much of the time these OFA volunteers were working their ass off for health care, the public option was part of the plan. In fact, here's what the OFA site still says right now:

If you don't have insurance the Obama plan offers a public health insurance option to provide the uninsured and those who can't find affordable coverage with a real choice.

That is, one of the eighteen things Obama still promises to those two million volunteers working for him is that his plan will include a public option. Only, as of Monday, his plan definitely does not.

Now, as it happens, I spoke to the local OFA group on Tuesday. So I may actually have a better idea than Plouffe on what—using precisely the same measure he is using, though using data that actually post-dates Obama's capitulation—the grassroots thinks about Obama's capitulation. Most of all, I think, they'd like clearer information about what the plans really do (it might help, for example, if OFA actually updated the website to let activists know a principle they've been fighting for is no longer part of the plan). But mostly they were, at the least, dismayed that Joe Lieberman got to dictate the terms of this plan. And many of them were a hell of a lot more pissed off than that.

Plouffe points to the enthusiasm of two million Obama supporters who have been fighting for—among other things—a public option. Apparently, without bothering to check about how those two million activists feel yet, Plouffe claims they're still supportive.

Plouffe may have a rude awakening about the base's enthusiasm come tomorrow's book event.