

And the word for today is: synergy

By Sandy Eaton, RN

I was sitting in the State House balcony on May 22 watching the House vote on our patient safety bill when I started thinking about the forces that helped bring us there. Sitting next to me was Sue Kirby from the Massachusetts Senior Action Council, whose members played such an important role in constituent visits with our senators. Then I got the May/June issue of the *Massachusetts Nurse Advocate*. On the front cover was a picture of the State House steps taken on Nurses Day – it included John McCormack, co-chair of the Coalition to Protect Massachusetts Patients, and Jeff Crosby, president of the North Shore Labor Council, surrounded by front-line nurses and healthcare professionals.

Year by year, our involvement in central labor councils deepens – in Pittsfield and Worcester, in Boston and Lynn – as actions of mutual support breed bonds of respect. Our long-term involvement in such coalitions as Jobs with Justice and Mass-Care has earned broad commitment to our patient and nurse protection

agenda. Our key role in the campaigns to pass the omnibus health reform Question 5 on the 2000 Massachusetts ballot and to amend the state constitution to make access to quality, affordable health insurance the right of all residents helped make us central to initiatives to construct a just healthcare system. Groups as diverse as the League of Women Voters and the Coalition for Social Justice stand with us. At contract time and in the Legislature, we can count on active support from our allies, just as they can count on us.

Last October, when we picketed the Massachusetts Mutual Insurance Company in Springfield in defense of our members exploited by Bay State Medical Center, a number of local high school students joined us, crossing Main Street to march with us in solidarity. Perhaps some of them, if able to complete their education, will join our ranks in a few years. Opportunities will continue to arise where we fight the good fight ourselves and extend a hand to those whose goals overlap with our own. ■

Income tax repeal: A reckless proposal that will endanger our patients

A dangerous proposal will appear as Question 1 on the ballot in November which will:

- Put health care and patients at risk
- Force children into larger classes at school
- Have an unknown impact on our economy

A question on the November ballot will completely repeal the state personal income tax. If it passes, this initiative will cost the state more than \$12 billion a year in revenues, **equal to 40 percent of the entire state budget!**

If passed, this measure will force local communities to further raise property taxes to maintain local services. But even with significant property tax hikes, passage of this question will still lead to drastic cuts to local services, like emergency personnel, teachers, police, nurses and firefighters.

“The thought of this passing really worries me,” said MNA Vice President Donna Kelly-Williams, RN. “Most hospitals receive significant state money. If this question were to pass, it could lead to serious cuts and affect the services we provide. This is a reckless proposal that will endanger our patients.”

Unit 7 President Mike D’Intinosanto, RN added, “With most of our facilities already caring for the most vulnerable in our state with a skeleton crew, I am really concerned about the negative impact this proposal would

have on our facilities and our patients who so desperately need us.”

“I can’t even begin to imagine how difficult it will be for our members and our patients if such bad proposal becomes law.”

“It’s hard to say what exactly is going to get cut, but I’m not comfortable playing Russian roulette with the health and well being of patients across this state,” stated MNA President Beth Piknick, RN. “Going around the state talking to RNs in state facilities, public health departments, teaching and community hospitals and in the public schools. I can’t even begin to imagine how difficult it will be for our members and our patients if such bad proposal becomes law. The impact will be truly devastating.”

In response to this threat, concerned citizens, service providers and health care and education organizations have joined together in the Coalition for our Communities to educate people about the harm such an irresponsible proposal would cause. For more information please visit www.massnurses.org and click on the icon for VoteNoQuestion1.com. To become involved in the campaign for our communities, please contact Riley Ohlson at 781.830.5740 or at rohlon@mnarn.org. ■

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