

Nurses' guide to single-payer reform

Campaign for health care amendment to state constitution gaining momentum

Supporters plan action for May 10 constitutional convention

Representatives from 30 labor and community groups have joined 50 other organizations committed to support passage of the health care amendment that would guarantee every Massachusetts resident access to affordable coverage for medically necessary health and mental health care services. The amendment will be on the agenda of the constitutional convention scheduled to meet again on May 10.

Amendment part of 'real reform'

The health care constitutional amendment is receiving growing support as more and more groups see it as an essential foundation for real reform. On Jan. 25 representatives from 30 labor and community groups state-

wide met at the MNA headquarters in Canton with members of the campaign to discuss an action plan. The groups agreed that getting the amendment on the ballot is critical for achieving comprehensive health care coverage for every Massachusetts resident that is affordable and fair. The amendment needs 50 votes at the next constitutional convention to qualify for the November ballot.

"While many of our member organizations support immediate action on some of the health care reforms that the governor and Legislature are considering, the constitutional amendment is an opportunity to move towards a real solution to the health care crisis in Massachusetts," said Rand Wilson, co-chair of Jobs with Justice's Health

Care Action Committee. "Passing the amendment will 'lock-in' progress made by this Legislature and build momentum to finish the job."

The constitutional amendment would require the state to guarantee every Massachusetts resident access to affordable coverage for medically necessary health and mental

The text of the proposed constitutional amendment reads:

"Upon ratification of this amendment and thereafter, it shall be the obligation and duty of the Legislature and executive officials, on behalf of the Commonwealth, to enact and implement such laws, subject to approval of the voters at a state wide election, as will

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— Julie Pinkham
Executive Director, MNA

The Power of Solidarity

The 2006 Massachusetts Jobs With Justice Annual Dinner

Please join Jobs with Justice in honoring some of those who showed the power of solidarity in 2005.

The JWJ annual dinner will be held at Suffolk Downs on Thursday, March 23, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Chairing the event is Julie Pinkham, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Nurses Association.

Honorees:

- ☐ Utility Workers Local 369 and the workers of NSTAR and their supporters for taking on corporate greed and winning.
- ☐ Project Hip-Hop & the Union of Minority Neighborhoods.
- ☐ The students and teachers of Fenway High School for their support and solidarity in the fight against the deportation of Boston teacher Obain Attouoman.

Plus, a look forward to:

- ☐ The Boston Hotel Workers' Rising Campaign
- ☐ The Campaign for Security Guard Justice
- ☐ Organizing Cable Workers
- ☐ The Personal Care Attendant Campaign
- ☐ Fighting Union Busting at Verizon Wireless
- ☐ Dignity at Wal-Mart

Tickets are \$75 each and can be purchased by calling 617-524-8778. ■



Save the Date
JWJ's Health Care Action Day
Thursday, March 30

Representatives from Jobs with Justice (JWJ) are asking unions and community organizations to have their members fill out pre-addressed JWJ postcards that will be sent to state legislators in order to ensure a YES vote in favor of the health care constitutional amendment. At least 50 senators and representatives need to vote YES at the May 10 constitutional convention. For more information—including postcards and community outreach letters—call 617-524-8778 or send an email message to AFlores@massjw.net. ■



health care services including prescription drugs and devices but the amendment does not restrict the Legislature on how to provide that access. Sent to legislators as a ballot petition by 71,385 registered voters in July 2004, the amendment received overwhelming preliminary approval with 153 votes, far surpassing the required 50. The amendment must now receive a second "yes" vote by 50 legislators at the upcoming constitutional convention in May, and then go to voters in November 2006 for final ratification. Once the laws are enacted to ensure universal coverage, proposed plans will go to voters for their approval.

Constitutional convention

A constitutional convention is a joint meeting of the state House of Representatives and the state Senate to consider only amendments to the state Constitution.

"The amendment will assure two steps forward stays two steps forward. Unfortunately we've seen the incremental efforts to address and improve health coverage eroded repeatedly to the detriment of those most in need," said Julie Pinkham, executive director of the MNA.

ensure that no Massachusetts resident lacks comprehensive, affordable, and equitably financed health insurance coverage for all medically necessary preventive, acute and chronic health care and mental health care services, prescription drugs and devices."

'Realistic, sustainable solution'

"We see the Health Care Amendment as creating the legal and political framework for reaching a realistic, sustainable solution to the health care affordability crisis in Massachusetts," said Barbara Roop, co-chair of the HCMC. "The growing grass roots support is a powerful reminder that the need for health care reform is a 'kitchen table' issue debated by working families around the commonwealth not just a public policy debate for the State House," she added.

Mark Blum, executive director of America's Agenda: Health Care for All said, "Assurance of the right to affordable health care for all is a measure of the basic decency of any society. With this constitutional amendment, Massachusetts will bring hope to millions of American families that one day they, too, may have this right protected once and for all." ■

