

Nurses' Guide to **Single Payer Health Care**

Labor Campaign for Single-Payer

By Sandy Eaton, RN

The Labor Campaign for Single Payer, along with a growing number of nurses, doctors and other health care advocates, recently sent a letter to President Obama informing him that there is a better approach to health care reform that "will bring down premiums, bring down the

deficit, cover the uninsured, strengthen Medicare, and stop insurance company abuses." The letter, which is printed below, was sent just after the president's State of the Union address.

To learn more about this effort or to register for the LCSP's upcoming national labor meeting visit laborforsinglepayer.org. ■

LABOR CAMPAIGN FOR SINGLE-PAYER HEALTH CARE

Health Care is a Right — Not a Privilege

February 3, 2010

Dear President Obama,

The lives and livelihoods of a vast majority of Americans have been held hostage for decades by this country's failure to provide an equitable, socially just health care system. Your administration should be commended for identifying the need and pushing for a comprehensive solution to this uniquely American dilemma. But this year's rancorous, special interest driven congressional debate is now stalemated over differing House and Senate passed Bills, which do not meet the test of either equity or justice.

As grassroots representatives of millions of this country's union members and in the interest of all working people, we respectfully submit that taking the single-payer solution off the table was both a strategic and tactical mistake. Medicare is an example of a successful single payer model and it is a very popular health care program. A "Medicare-for-All" system would be far more cost effective than any of the proposed current reforms based on the continuation of for-profit, market-based insurance. And it is a program that Americans are already familiar with—a solution right at our fingertips.

The rising cost of health care is one of the biggest issues in the collective bargaining process. Many working families have given up wage increases and are being asked to cover more of their health care costs. Others are losing their health care benefits altogether because more employers are dropping individual and family coverage. This is a crisis and a moral issue. People currently covered by private health insurance are understandably apprehensive when it is suggested that their only alternative to degrading that coverage is not to be covered at all—as is the current situation for approximately 50 million of our fellow citizens today.

Our current jobs crisis is further aggravated since the cost of health care in the U.S. is almost double that in other industrial countries, making our export sector increasingly uncompetitive and a major cause of the off-shoring of jobs.

At this past year's AFL-CIO convention in Pittsburgh, on the very day that you, Mr. President, addressed the Convention and were so warmly received, the delegates unanimously adopted a detailed resolution in support of a single-payer, "Medicare for all" system in America.

We welcome your call for a better approach that will "bring down premiums, bring down the deficit, cover the uninsured, strengthen Medicare and stop insurance company abuses." We submit to you that a "Medicare for all" health care system accomplishes all of these worthy goals, contrary to the untruths that have been advanced by opponents of true health care reform.

The American people deserve better. We want our leaders to solve the health care crisis and to do so in a transparent way. No one in this country should have to fear losing their health care coverage or face bankruptcy. This is simply unacceptable for the United States of America. The time for single payer health care is now. We urge you to use this impasse as the time to put single payer health care on the table and into the health care reform discussions as the real solution. Millions of working people and an overwhelming majority of unionists voted their confidence in your call for "change we can believe in."

Respectfully submitted,

The Labor Campaign for Single-Payer Health Care
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the Massachusetts **nurse**

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