

## Reform roundup: support for solid health care reform continues to mushroom

By Sandy Eaton, RN

The Massachusetts Health Care Trust bill, strengthened and re-filed as H.2127, has been assigned to the Joint Committee on Public Health. Rep. Matthew Patrick, D-Falmouth is the lead House sponsor, while Sen. Pat Jehlen, D-Somerville is the lead Senate sponsor.

- On April 4 the MNA's own Beth Piknick charmed all as the guest MC at Mass-Care's annual awards gala in the Ryles Jazz Club in Cambridge, with Jimmy Tingle bringing his own brand of humor to the issues of the day. Dr. Gordon Schiff, past president of Physicians for a National Health Program, was the keynote speaker, emphasizing the wasteful overhead represented by the commercial health insurance industry. He read off a list of CEO salaries that knocked everyone's socks off. He summarized the Massachusetts health reform plan of 2006 as S&M: nothing kinky, just shorthand for subsidies and mandates.
- Scrutiny of the Massachusetts approach to reform intensifies as key elements of this approach are pushed within the Beltway. The major health insurance lobbies are demanding the individual mandate, requiring annual means testing and civil penalties for those not buying their products.
- Meanwhile, Rep. John Conyers' Medicare for All bill, HR676, has garnered ever-growing support, with over five hundred labor organizations in 49 states now on

board, including 20 national unions and 39 state labor federations. Last summer, the National Council of Mayors endorsed it.

- In the weeks following the strong, vocal call for single-payer national health insurance by those gathered outside the Northeast Regional White House summit on health care at the University of Vermont on March 17, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont introduced his own single-payer bill, S.703.
- Healthcare Now is calling for a national day of action in support of real healthcare reform on May 30. In Massachusetts, Jobs with Justice is organizing a teach-in on the various state and national proposals to be held at Harvard Medical School in Boston on Saturday, May 30 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. All are welcome. Details will be posted, as they become available, on the web sites of Jobs with Justice (massjwj.net) and Mass-Care (masscare.org). See you there?
- Both Houses of the Maine state legislature have endorsed a single payer healthcare system and HR 676. The Maine vote follows a similar vote in the New Hampshire House, which in March voted 192-150 in favor of a resolution that endorses HR 676 and a single payer health care system. Separately, a poll conducted by the Maine Medical Society shows that a majority of the state's physicians support a single payer healthcare system. ■



Sandra Hottin, Sandy Eaton, Donna Kelly-Williams, MNA President Beth Piknick at Mass-Care's annual awards gala in Cambridge.

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