

LABOR CAMPAIGN FOR SINGLE-PAYER HEALTH CARE

Healthcare Is A Right - Not a Privilege

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Honorable <First name> <Last name>
Member U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Representative <last name>,

You are receiving this letter because of the concern you have consistently shown for the welfare of working people and the great majority of Americans, so many today victimized by the deepening economic crisis. Your membership in either the House Congressional Black Caucus, Hispanic Caucus, or Progressive Caucus is emblematic of that concern and represents to those of us working at the District and State level of Labor an expectation of thoughtful public policy support informed by internal caucus discussion and fact sharing as well as the voices of your constituency back home.

We are sending this letter as representatives of a very large caucus of our own—the nationwide grassroots Labor Campaign for a Single-Payer Healthcare System (LCS-P). Single-Payer legislation, as currently contained in HR 676, introduced by Congressman John Conyers and Co-Sponsored by 77 members of the 111th Congress has been endorsed by 39 of the 50 State Federations of Labor, well over 120 of the largest Central Labor Councils, and hundreds of other labor bodies representing millions of workers throughout America. On January 10, 2009, those millions of workers gained a new voice as LCS-P was formally launched. We are now adding strength and political activism to long-standing and new Single-Payer coalitions in communities across the country.

President Obama has called for a substantive reform of the nation’s healthcare system and legislation that will make health care universally available to all persons in America and we understand that both the House and Senate leadership have placed Health Care Reform on a fast track for consideration this year. We applaud the President’s call and the initiative of the Congressional leadership on the issue but can’t understand why so much of the public discussion seems centered on bandaging the current broken system and placating so many of the agents of its dysfunction. Fear of a Single-Payer, “Medicare for All” system is gripping Wall Street and K Street, not the majority of the folks on Main Street.

Those of us working at the local and community level have come to know first-hand how socially destructive the current crisis in health care is to millions of families and, ultimately, all Americans. The desperation that has long been felt by the nearly 50 million uninsured Americans and a nearly equal amount of the under-insured is now being shared by additional millions of newly unemployed workers. Double digit unemployment is just around the corner. In some communities, it’s been in high double-digit for decades.

Let’s recognize this catastrophic situation for what it is and how, among all the industrial nations of the world, we alone have failed to put our citizen’s health care out of reach of the gluttony of our market place profiteers. Some public officials like to go on about how “we need something uniquely American” when it comes to solving the health care crisis. That’s a cop out. For over 40 years, Medicare has served needs of our post-65 citizens at one-tenth the administrative cost of private insurance. Proven social insurance systems are all around us on this planet and our ability to compete in

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the global economy is severely challenged because of our failure to emulate them. HR 676 would be uniquely American in its ability to level the global playing field and place us on a path of economic recovery in which all in this country would have a greater opportunity to share in our prosperity and income security.

One of the myths that opponents of Single-Payer peddle is that most people are satisfied with the insurance they currently have. Excusing the millions we mentioned above who have none to be satisfied with, many of us are involved in contract negotiations and have seen the downward spiral of quality, affordable protection in employer-based health insurance plans. The world of many workers enjoying comparable health care coverage as, let's say, Members of Congress has become history. Our members know through family associations that Medicare, which for 40 years has served post-65 citizens at one-tenth the administrative costs of private insurance works and that it provides the choice of physicians, hospitals, and other provider services. HR 676, a Bill that 30% of the House currently co-sponsors, provides the same freedom to choose.

The quality of life of workers, union and non-union alike has been in decline for decades and the crisis in health care has been one of the primary factors. The election results of November of 2008 sent an unaccustomed wave of hope and expectations through the sinking bottom two-thirds of our society. A new set of values is emerging at the grassroots. It's less "me" and more "we." A new social language, based on shared exasperation is finding its way into the national conversation. The political and public policy status quo is no longer selling at the grassroots. Some members of Congress will continue to face backwards and defend assumptions no longer reliable among the electorate. We hope you will be among those who are prepared to tack into the wind and take a stand for nothing less than the most equitable, cost controlling, universal health care solution---the single-payer, "Medicare for All" legislative initiative.

We call on you to become a co-sponsor of HR 676, both on the merits of single payer as a proven system throughout the world, and to remove health care from the practice of discrimination and manipulation by the insurance industry whose swollen profits are today underwriting the web of deception about any form of social insurance in health care. We hope you will also support having the Single Payer option fully represented in all hearings and debates. Your support would certainly be responsive to a significant number of your constituents who are becoming increasingly active on this issue and will help silence the undocumented claim that Single Payer is not 'politically feasible' at this time.

A number of labor organizations in your District, support the Labor Campaign for Single-Payer. They speak for thousands of workers and retirees and their families. We encourage them to communicate their concerns and expectations to those constituents and to your office on a continuing basis. We also hope you will participate in more meetings with these constituent/Single Payer supporters. You have consistently earned our members respect and support in the past and we truly appreciate your ongoing stewardship of our interests. Now, on this most critical of all issues, we hope the same solidarity of interest can prevail.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Jeff Crosby, President Maria Elena Durazo, President Pat Eiding, President Jos Williams, President
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