



# Minnesota Universal Health Care Coalition

## February 2010 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends,

Federal health care reform is still up in the air. President Obama has invited Republicans to the negotiating table, in public view on TV. Many Democrats are hoping for “pass and pledge”, a pledge by the Senate to amend certain portions of the reform bill through reconciliation (a process that requires only 51 votes) if the House passes the existing Senate version. The story is not over. But regardless of the national scene, we are moving forward in Minnesota and things are looking brighter. The major [DFL gubernatorial candidates would sign](#) the MN Health Plan. We’ve added more co-authors to the MN Health Plan in the House and we had a successful committee hearing! Why do we push the bill when it can’t pass this year? Because it builds momentum, strengthens support among legislators, raises the profile of the bill, and improves it through the amendment process. All of these make subsequent efforts go quicker and with growing support. It’s working! Read on!

*Amy Lange*  
Executive Director

### **SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE PASSES THE MINNESOTA HEALTH PLAN!**

The Minnesota Health Plan passed on a voice vote in the Senate Judiciary committee Thursday February 11<sup>th</sup>. The hearing focused on issues of data-privacy, legislative audits, investigations of fraud and abuse and other matters under the jurisdiction of the committee. The bill passes next to the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

### **SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE AND CHAIR OF HEALTH POLICY COMMITTEE SIGN AS CO-AUTHORS OF THE MINNESOTA HEALTH PLAN**

Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher and Rep. Paul Thissen, Chair of the Health and Human Services Policy Committee signed on as co-authors of the Minnesota Health Plan (HF 135/ HF2256) at the start of the legislative session. Both are DFL candidates for Governor. There are now 73 co-authors on the bill, House and Senate combined, well over 1/3 of the legislature.

### **PENNSYLVANIA DEMOCRATIC STATE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY ENDORSES SINGLE-PAYER!**

On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee unanimously endorsed the following resolution:  
[Endorsement of the Family and Business HealthCare Security Act](#)

"Whereas, the passage of this legislation would provide a model for the U.S. and would attract business to Pennsylvania; THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that PA State Democratic Committee calls upon all the entire PA legislative delegation to endorse the funding of an Economic Impact Study of the bill and to support the passage of SB400/HB1660 at the earliest opportunity; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution shall be transmitted to all PA County Commissioners, row officers, the entire PA legislative delegation and to the Governor of Pennsylvania."

[Read more](#)

### **CALIFORNIA SENATE PASSES SINGLE-PAYER HEALTH CARE BILL**

On a 22-14 vote a single-payer bill passed the California Senate last month. The Universal Healthcare Act, SB810, will now move to a vote by the Assembly. California has twice passed a single-payer bill only to have it vetoed by Gov. Schwarzenegger. Bill sponsor Sen. Mark Leno promotes the bill not just as a humane health system but as a jobs program. “We can’t compete in a global marketplace where all our competitors have had the government take the burden of healthcare off the shoulders of their employers.....” [Read more](#)

## IN THE NEWS

### **Health Care Costs Are Biggest Barrier to Business Expansion- MN Survey Reports**

In recent survey commissioned by HealthPartners, and reported in the Star Tribune, businesses state that health care costs are the biggest obstacle to expansion, more than the economy itself. “Almost two-thirds of companies said health costs jumped 10 percent or more in the past two years, with a quarter reporting costs surging by more than 20 percent.” Employers are cutting their costs by shifting more costs to employees, to the point where employees avoid seeking needed medical care.

[Read the full article](#)

### **Number of Uninsured in Minnesota Jumps By 100,000**

According to a [Star Tribune article on February 5<sup>th</sup>](#), more than 100,000 Minnesotans lost health insurance between 2007 and 2009. The number of uninsured now stands at 480,000. This is the highest rate of uninsured in MN since the state began tracking in 1990. The percentage of Minnesotan receiving insurance from an employer fell from 62.5% to 57.2% in the past two years.

See more statistics from the [Health Economics Program](#) at the Minnesota Department of Health

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Won't people over-use health care in a single-payer system?**

Rather than fear that people will go to the doctor too much under a single-payer system, we should be concerned that people in the U.S., even those with insurance seek medical care too infrequently. First of all, primary care office visits are not the cost drivers in health care. Studies have shown that 37% of people in the U.S. fail to see the doctor when sick, decline to fill a prescription or complete recommended follow up due to cost<sup>1</sup>. In addition, there is substantial evidence that co-pays and deductibles (what conservatives refer to as “skin in the game”) lead people to decline needed examinations and treatment. A recent study just published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that among seniors, **even a minimal increase in co-pays led to fewer doctor visits and subsequently to more and longer hospital stays**<sup>2</sup>. Studies have shown that continuity of care with a primary care physician/nurse-practitioner reduces health care costs<sup>3</sup>, results in fewer hospitalizations and emergency room visits<sup>4</sup> and improves patient health status and chronic disease outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

## TAKE ACTION!

### **Have you contacted your legislator in support of the Minnesota health plan?**

The message can be simple: “I am a constituent and I support the Minnesota Health Plan because \_\_\_\_, I hope I can count on your support for the bill.” Let this be the start of an ongoing conversation with your legislator. Keep in touch until the bill passes. Find your legislator [here](#).

### **Grow the movement by helping to organize events in your or a neighboring district**

The MUHCC Community Organizing Committee is looking for enthusiastic volunteers to join our efforts. [Contact us](#) for more information.

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead*

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

### Health Care Reform Dollars and Sense, Are We There Yet?

MUHCC presents a workshop at the International Women's Day Conference at Coffman Union on the U of MN Minneapolis campus, Saturday March 6<sup>th</sup>. Workshop is 1:15-2:30, event runs all day. [Download a flyer](#)

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