



# Minnesota Universal Health Care Coalition

## November 2009 E-Newsletter

Dear Friends,

I have mixed reactions about the recently passed House health care reform bill. It is an historical **political** victory, but it falls far short of the sweeping **policy** changes we need. My hero, the late Senator Paul Wellstone said there are three critical ingredients to progressive social change: electoral politics (getting the right folks elected), good public policy, and grassroots organizing. Clearly we don't yet have the right mix of ingredients. We can do better in Minnesota. In Minnesota, 96% coverage isn't considered "universal" and expecting middle class families to spend 20% of their income on health care is not considered "affordable".

T.R. Reid, Washington Post correspondent and author of *The Healing of America, the Search for Better, Cheaper and Fairer Health Care* [says it well](#): "I'm tired of incremental; I've had it up to here with incremental change. Incremental change is what got us in the mess we are in. It's really time to fix the system. It would be preferable if we could put everyone into a single system like we see in other countries, it would be fairer and it would save us tons of money and paperwork. It takes a national commitment to make the moral decision to provide care for everybody." **Let's make that moral decision and act on it!**

*Amy Lange*  
Executive Director

### WHERE ARE WE NATIONALLY?

On November 7, the House passed their final version of a health care reform bill, HR 3962. The Senate is expected to pass their final version of a health reform bill before the end of the year. A conference committee will then meet, hash out the differences between the House and Senate bill, and from this create a single "conference bill" that returns to each chamber for a vote. Once a conference bill passes both chambers, it is presented to the President for signature.

### WHAT IS IN THE 1,990 PAGE HOUSE BILL?

Concise and readable summaries are available at the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) and at the [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities](#). The bill falls short of our expectations that health care coverage is universal, affordable, and comprehensive. 96% of Americans are expected to be covered. Affordability is calculated by a complex formula (higher administrative costs anyone?) based on actuarial values, as explained by the [Congressional Budget Office](#). A projection for a family of four earning \$102,100 per year is \$15,000 annual premium, plus \$5500 in other expenses. This family would not qualify for subsidies, and thus would be spending 20% of their income on health insurance. And this is for a basic plan!

The public option in the House bill does not meet our criteria of a [strong public option](#). There is no guaranteed initial enrollment, and no ability for the government to set rates. Further, it is not open to everyone – only to the uninsured and employees of small businesses. The Congressional Budget Office has predicted that the public plan would attract a less healthy pool of enrollees, thus leading to higher premiums than private plans. This nearly guarantees its failure as a true competitor to private plans.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO SINGLE-PAYER IN CONGRESS?

The Kucinich amendment was stripped from the House bill and Rep. Anthony Weiner pulled his national single-payer amendment November 6<sup>th</sup>, the day before the historic vote was to take place. Representatives Kucinich and Conyers wrote a letter of caution to Speaker Nancy Pelosi and to single-payer supporters stating that the time was not right for a vote on single-payer.

“...While state single payer movements are already strong, the national single payer movement is still growing. Many progressives in Congress, ourselves included, feel that calling for a vote tomorrow for single payer would be tantamount to driving the movement over a cliff. The thrill of the vote would disappear quickly when the result would be characterized not as a new beginning for single payer but as an end...” [Read it in full here.](#)

**WHAT CAN WE DO FOR SINGLE-PAYER AT THIS POINT?** Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) will introduce a national single-payer amendment (S703) as well an amendment that would remove federal barriers to state’s adopting single-payer systems (similar to, but more far-reaching than the Kucinich amendment). Rep. Kucinich's amendment to allow states to more easily implement a single-payer system may be reinserted into the bill during the conference committee between the House and Senate. **Calls, emails and faxes are making a difference:** [Find your Senators and Representatives here.](#) *Let them know you support a national single-payer plan (S703) and state’s rights for single-payer.*

## SOBERING STATISTICS

A research team at Harvard Medical School estimates 2,266 U.S. military veterans under the age of 65 died last year because they lacked health insurance and thus had reduced access to care. That figure is more than 14 times the number of deaths (155) suffered by U.S. troops in Afghanistan in 2008, and more than twice as many as have died (911 as of Oct. 31) since the war began in 2001. [Read the Report.](#) Watch MUHCC Board Chair commenting on [WCCO TV](#)

## *Mobilize* for the Minnesota Health Plan Advocacy and Organizing Training was a Success

60 people participated in our Rochester Training on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Attendees learned about the Minnesota Health Plan, heard about single payer from a panel of physicians, engaged in tough questioning, participated in a mock lobbying visit and learned the fundamentals of community organizing. So far over 175 people have attended our Mobilize for the Minnesota Health Plan trainings.



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

**The 2010 Legislative Session Starts February 4<sup>th</sup>**

### Resuscitate GAMC (General Assistance Medical Care)

JOIN THE ACTION!

Wednesday November 18<sup>th</sup>, 3:30-6:30, Corner of Park Ave and 8<sup>th</sup> St, Downtown Minneapolis

Simulate a never-ending never moving emergency room line.

RSVP to [mail@ststephensmpls.org](mailto:mail@ststephensmpls.org), [Download a flyer](#)

### Phone Bank for the Minnesota Health Plan

Thursday November 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:00-8:00 at MUHCC 2469 University Ave W, St. Paul

Take part in the Campaign for the Minnesota Health Plan. [Sign up here](#)

## **Solving our Health Care Crisis- A Tour of 5 Northern Minnesota Cities**

Presentations will take place in Bemidji, Hallock, Thief River Falls, Warroad and International Falls between November 20<sup>th</sup> and November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## **Courageous Conversations on Health Care- A Community Forum on the Minnesota Health Plan in White Bear Lake**

Tuesday December 1<sup>st</sup>, 7:00-9:00, White Bear Unitarian Church, 328 Maple St., Mahtomedi MN 55115

Speakers include Chief Author, Senator John Marty, Dr. David Mair and Nancy Breyemeier, with opening remarks by Senator Sandy Rummel, Representatives Paul Gardner and Carolyn Laine. [Download a flyer](#)

Details for these and other events available on our [website](#)

## **MORE ORGANIZATIONS ENDORSE THE MINNESOTA HEALTH PLAN**

**Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPRIG)** voted to support single-payer health care and the Minnesota Health Plan as their legislative priority for the next three years. MPRIG is active on 7 MN campuses and boasts the best, brightest and most active students. MPRIG canvassers will bring the single-payer message into homes across the state.

### **OTHER RECENT ENDORSERS**

**Minnesota School Employees Association**

**American College of Nurse-Midwives, MN Chapter**

**National Lawyers Guild- MN Chapter**

**Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers**

## **MINNESOTA GOES NATIONAL**

Ann Settgast MD and Elizabeth Frost MD co-chairs of [Physicians for a National Health Program- MN Chapter](#), and members of the Steering Committee of the Minnesota Universal Health Care Coalition, have been asked to join the national Board of [Physicians for a National Health Program](#). They are cited for starting a successful state chapter and for doing effective coalition work in the state. They just had an opinion piece published in Minnesota Medicine. [Read it here](#). Way to go Ann and Elizabeth!

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WE CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU- [Donate Now](#)



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