



Wisconsin State AFL-CIO

... the Voice for Working Families

FUNDAMENTAL HEALTH CARE REFORM WITHIN REACH—IF WE ACT!

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For more than fourteen years, the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO has been pushing hard for fundamental health care reform in Wisconsin. In the early 1990's we helped form the Coalition for Wisconsin Health and drafted a path-breaking state-level "single-payer" health care bill (similar to Canada's very successful health care system).

We still support that proposal, but as the health care cost crisis deepened at the end of the last decade, we realized that we needed to develop a new plan—a plan that would meet many of our goals in the single-payer proposal, but one that could also get management support and have a significantly better chance of being passed by the Wisconsin Legislature.

Over five years ago we established a Wisconsin State AFL-CIO Health Care Committee to see if we could come up with a proposal that would control health care costs and take the cost of health care off the bargaining table for all our unions. The result, after many discussions and consultations with other groups and health care professionals, was the Wisconsin Health Care Partnership Plan (WHCPP).

You can read more detail about that Plan at our website (www.wisafclcio.org). The basic idea is that all workers and their dependents in Wisconsin would be covered by a common totally comprehensive health care plan. It would be financed in a fair fashion

by affordable co-pays and deductibles by workers, and a flat per worker per month fee by employers. Our actuary determined that in 2003 the employer would have to pay considerably less than \$300 per month per employee to provide this comprehensive health care (estimated at about \$330-340 in 2006). The cost is so low for two reasons: we would drastically cut the unnecessary administrative costs in our current health care system; and, with all employers both in the private and public sectors paying their fair share, the per-employee cost would be reduced dramatically.

All our unions endorsed this plan, as well as a number of private sector corporations, the associations that represent management in the public sector, as well as family farm groups such as the Wisconsin Farmers Union, the National Farmers Union, and advocacy organizations such as the AARP, the Alliance for Retired Americans, the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, Citizen Action of Wisconsin, and others.

So where are we today with this proposal? We're within shooting distance of success.

As a result of the November elections, we now have a Senate with a Democratic majority that is committed to fundamental health care reform. The Assembly still has a Republican majority, but we have some support among Republicans as well (for example, Republican Representative Terry Musser was our co-sponsor in the WHCPP bill that was introduced last April). Every poll before the November elections had fundamental health care reform as the first or second most important issue for voters. Many candidates, especially successful Senate Democratic challengers, had comprehensive health care reform as their number one issue.

We are now asking Governor Jim Doyle to include the WHCPP in his 2007-2008 Budget—and we urge you to call his office (608-266-1212) and urge him to do that. It's a long shot, but one we have to take.

We will also be reintroducing the WHCPP as a bill in the Legislature in January. We'll be asking you to call your local state legislators to become sponsors (1-800-362-9472). Senate Democrats as a group ran on comprehensive health care reform in the November elections. We need every single one of them as a sponsor of the Wisconsin Health Care Partnership Plan. We need Assembly Democrats to make the same commitment.

But we also need Republican support. Union members who have Republican Senate and Assembly representatives have a special responsibility—and opportunity—to get their legislators to support the WHCPP, the most innovative and practical health care reform proposal in the entire country.

If our elected officials act in the interests of working families, Wisconsin could lead the country in fundamental health care reform and Governor Jim Doyle could go down in history as the leader of health care reform in the United States.

But it's up to us to create the grass-roots pressure to make our elected representatives do the right thing. Let's do it!