

Health Care Is A Right!

Inside this issue:

Challenge grant met	2
Contacting legislators	2
Forums galore!	3
Big Tent	3
Core values	4
Leaders honored	5
Radio broadcast	5

THE WISCONSIN HEALTH CARE REFORM PANEL

In the wake of November's election results, members of the Wisconsin Health Care Reform Panel are more committed than ever to making the public and elected representatives aware of the three health care reform bills that were before Wisconsin legislative committees in 2006. One tool is the series of forums discussed on page 3 of this newsletter.

The proposals differ considerably from each other, but each will reduce the number of individuals in the state who are without health care coverage and can help make more effective use of our excellent health care resources.

Series of Public Hearings on Our Coalition's Legislation Scheduled

The latest of many signs that the Coalition for Wisconsin Health is building momentum for its Wisc. Health Security Act is an unprecedented series of public hearings *around the state* for our bill and other major health care reform proposals (see page 3 articles). By the time you read this only the first of these hearings may have occurred, in Green Bay on March 8.

If you would like to attend one of these hearings but have questions, contact us (see box on page 4). If you are unable to make it to a hearing, see the advice on the next page for making your views known.

This news came on the heels of the Wisc.

Health Security Act quickly being reintroduced for the 2007-08 session, as **Senate Bill 51** and **Assembly Bill 94**. We have four more

sponsors in the Assembly than in 2005-06.

Our Coalition's legislation has had public hearings before, most recently in

2003 by the Assembly health committee chaired by then-Rep. Gregg Underheim (R-Oshkosh), but a series of hearings across the state is a first, as well as a golden opportunity. Much thanks goes to the chair of the Senate's Health & Human Services committee, Jon Erpenbach, who was among the sponsors of the Wisc. Health Security Act in 2005-06.

This is one of many positive developments that have been occurring almost weekly for

Continued on page 4

Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Scheduled hearings on SB 51/AB 94:

- March 8, 4:00 , in Green Bay
- March 22,4:00, Eau Claire - Chippewa Valley Tech College Auditorium

Hearings are also likely in:

- Milwaukee
- Madison
- Wausau
- Superior
- La Crosse

For details, call or write to our Coalition soon.

Voters Across Wisconsin Demand Reform

In November, citizens in six counties and five cities across Wisconsin voted resoundingly in favor of major health care reform. This clear message was sent as the result of advisory referenda in these areas.

All were worded simi-

larly, calling on the Legislature to establish a plan by 2008 that will reduce health care costs by at least 15% and guarantee access to universal, affordable coverage for all residents. The average approval rate was 82%!

The highest percentage

of "Yes" votes, 88% were in two areas near the Mississippi River, Dunn and Jackson Counties. The other counties were Dane, Eau Claire, La Crosse, and Wood. The cities were

Continued on page 4

Challenge Grant Met!

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health is pleased to announce that it secured the \$5,000 matching grant offered in honor of the late Connie Thurlow, longtime Secretary of the Coalition, by meeting the friendly “challenge” announced in our previous newsletter.

As checks came into our office it was heartwarming to see how many of her friends wished to remember Connie with a donation for the cause to which she had donated so much of her time, talent and interest.

A number of the replies included an amount for dues and a separate amount to honor Connie. Several of our members who were lucky enough to be active in the Coalition when Connie was were happy to send a generous remembrance.

Although there was not a specific deadline, it was pleasant to realize that the \$5,000 match had arrived by the end of the year, with \$300 to spare.

What was it about the challenge grant that inspired some rather unusual gifts? When a check arrived with a return address of “Riverside Drive, New York City” we wondered how those people knew about us. It turns out

Kat Becker and Tony Schultz in Athens, Wisconsin, who married recently, decided they owned enough of the articles that are usual wedding gifts. They suggested that guests donate to our Coalition instead, and a couple from New York favored us with a check in honor of the newlyweds.

Another unexpected windfall came from John Stellmacher, a promising young politician who started a campaign for the Legislature last year. He had sponsored a Health Care Reform Panel in Whitewater (see page 3) and is strongly in favor of single-payer health care reform. Unfortunately he was discouraged from entering the primary, but he had a \$501 campaign fund remaining which he donated to our Coalition. Our best wishes go with him when he is in the running next time.

Another generous donation came from Peggy and Clem Baime. Peggy attends our meetings whenever she can and contributes effectively to our discussions. She has been working for single payer health care in Wisconsin since 1981!

That is six years earlier than many of us, who trace our Coalition’s founding to

1987, one year after a Madison referendum. A group working toward that referendum met monthly at a Monona motel and later at St. John Lutheran Church. Peggy remembers Ted Steege, who was the pastor there, and Frank Newgent from Merrimac, a member of the State Hospital Board, among originators. Marjie Colson and Peggy did tabling on the Capitol Square at the farmers’ market to promote the Madison referendum, in which over 75% of voters favored a single-payer universal health care plan. Recently Peggy and Clem sat down to analyze their priorities. When single-payer health care reform was deemed very high on their list, they decided to make a substantial gift to the group working for that – our Coalition for Wisconsin Health. They urge us, “Keep up the good fight!”

Lastly, Estelle Katz made a donation in honor of Anne Rifkin, who recently passed away. Anne was part of a group in Saskatchewan that designed and implemented the original universal health care plan in Canada. Estelle is a friend of Anne’s brother, Joe Pollack, in Milwaukee.

In lieu of traditional wedding gifts, one couple in Marathon County specified a donation to the Coalition for Wisconsin Health as an alternative.

To Contact Your Elected Officials

If you aren’t sure who your two legislators are or want to register a brief opinion **by phone**, call the toll-free Legislative Hotline, which is staffed from 8:15 to 4:45, at 800-362-9472 or 266-9960. The TDD number is 800-228-2115.

You can **send a letter** to your state senator at P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707. For Assembly representatives with last names beginning A through L, write to P.O. Box 8952, Madison, WI 53708; it’s P.O. Box 8953 for representatives with last names from M through Z.

To send **e-mail**, visit the Legislature’s website at www.legis.state.wi.us, select Senate or Assembly, and you will quickly spot the link for the e-mail directory.

Write Governor Jim Doyle at 115-East State Capitol, Madison, WI 53707-7863; call 608-266-1212, or e-mail governor@wisconsin.gov.

Forums Galore!

In our previous (Summer) issue, we reported that health care reform was a hotter topic across Wisconsin due to a forum format being used repeatedly, the Wisc. Health Care Reform Panel. These forums feature presentations by the groups pushing three major reform proposals: our Coalition for Wisconsin Health, the Wisc. Health Project, and the AFL-CIO. We reported on about ten forums in communities from Black River Falls to Green Bay.

Forums are becoming even more frequent thanks to such organizations as the Wisc. Council of Churches and the League of Women Voters. Over four months starting in mid-October, more than 20 were held in such communities as Sheboygan, Janesville, Monroe, Dodgeville, Fennimore, Darlington, Platteville, Eau Claire, Tomah, Columbus, Beaver Dam, Hayward, Ashland, and Superior.

Upcoming forums are:

March 13, 7-9 pm
Milwaukee, Islamic Society of Milw., 4707 S. 13th St
March 15, 6:30-8:30 pm
Beloit, Our Lady of the Assumption, Shopiere Rd
March 18, 6:30-8:30 pm
Shorewood, North Shore Presbyterian Church
March 22, 7-9 pm
Whitewater, City Hall Community Room
March 25, 2-4 pm
Madison, Covenant Presbyterian Church, S. Segoe Rd
March 26, 6-8 pm
La Crosse, Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership room 127, Viterbo campus
April 18, 8-10 am
Kenosha, Gateway Technical College
April 19, 6-8 pm
Peshigo (site uncertain)
April 21, 9-11 am
Combined Locks, Christ the King Church
April 21, 12:30-2:30 pm
Neenah, First Presbyterian Church, 200 Church St
April 21, 3:30-5:30 pm
Oshkosh, St. Paul UCC, 1250 Leonard Point Rd

April 24, 7-9 pm
Milwaukee, Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun, 2020 W. Brown Deer Rd
April 26, 7-9 pm
River Falls, 1st Congregational UCC
April 26, 7-9 pm
Lodi, Public Library
May 3, 7-9 pm
Brookfield, Unitarian Universalist Church West, 13001 W. North Ave
May 8, 7-9 pm
Milwaukee, Ebenezer Church of God in Christ, 3132 N Martin Luther King
You are welcome to contact our office if you have questions about a forum.



Our Coalition's chair, Epilepsy Foundation of South Central Wisc. executive director Art Taggart, at a televised League of Women Voters forum

Rep. Chuck Benedict, a physician who is our lead author in the Assembly, will be our Coalition's speaker at the forum in Beloit on March 15th.

The Big Tent Initiative

The series of Wisconsin Health Care Reform Panels that our Coalition is engaged in—see the article above—has led to a joint effort called the Big Tent Initiative. Examples of other groups joining in are Disability Rights Wisconsin, the National Association of Social Workers—Wisc. Chapter, AARP Wisconsin, the Wisc. Alliance for Women's Health, the Wisc. Council on Children and Families, and ABC for Health.

The purpose of this cam-

paign is to impress upon Governor Doyle how strong the support is among the citizenry for comprehensive health care reform. Participating groups issued action alerts or e-mailed their members about urging the Governor to make major reform a high priority. Though there are at least three different reform plans from among these groups, they agreed to act in unison to the extent possible and are calling for a reform plan that is based on the following three principles:

1. It guarantees access to affordable, comprehensive health care to all WI residents.
2. It maintains and improves choice of health care provider and the quality of health care services offered to Wisconsin residents.
3. It implements strategies that reduce and contain costs to assure affordable coverage for all individuals and employers.

See the article on our Coalition's core values for how those values dovetail with these three principles.

“Core Values” Identified

Our Coalition’s Wisconsin Health Security Act is widely recognized as an ideal health care system, but people who are pessimistic about politicians’ willpower often suggest that our Coalition needs to consider whether and when it would support a major reform that had many good features but not all of the ones in our legislation. With the possible need to consider compromises in mind, Coalition leaders spent time in 2006 defining our core values. Together they can serve as criteria for measuring the worth of other proposals. The following are these core values.

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health:

- Respects the intrinsic value, dignity and unique needs of each individual in the way healthcare is provided to all.
- Considers access to adequate health care, food and shelter as equally essential social rights.
- Affirms the right of patients to choose their private health care providers and participate in decisions about their care
- Firmly believes that health care is cooperative activity between non-profit private providers and government, rather than a for-profit enterprise that com-

pensates investors by denying care to the poorest and sickest among us.

- Supports key roles of the federal government which includes involvement in testing new drugs, treatments and equipments; promoting best medical practices; and reducing medical program duplication.
- Promotes a comprehensive, single payer health care system that provides high quality health care for all Wisconsin residents, regardless of their age, sex, health status and is not tied to employment.
- Urges consumer participation in program decisions and oversight.

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, a former champion of our legislation in the State Capitol, is now on a subcommittee with jurisdiction over national health insurance.

Public Hearings (continued from page 1)

the Coalition for Wisconsin Health since the election in November resulted in dramatic leadership shifts in Congress and Wisconsin’s Senate.

Another is that the primary author of our legislation, Sen. Mark Miller, was

named to the powerful Joint Committee on Finance. It is likely that any major health care reform in Wisconsin will have to get through that committee in addition to health committees in each house of the Legislature.

Coalition for Wisconsin Health

Mission: People first in health care

1202 Williamson Street
Madison, WI 53703
608-663-8322
www.wisconsinhealth.org

Newsletter production: Rich Bogovich, Katie Wenban, Jim Kellerman, Dr. Linda Farley

Voters Demand Reform (continued from page 1)

De Pere, Green Lake, Lodi, Manitowoc, and Racine.

The campaign to place health care reform referenda on local ballots started in Eau Claire and quickly spread to other areas, thanks to groups like One Wisconsin Now and Citizen Action of Wisconsin.

Advocates of some other major health care reforms (see articles on page 3) maintain that their proposals would meet the referenda’s

dual goals of reducing costs by at least 15% and guaranteeing access to all residents, but the Coalition for Wisconsin Health argues that the Wisc. Health Security Act (SB 51/AB 94) is most likely to achieve necessary savings yet also offers the best coverage.

The key difference is that only our Wisc. Health Security Act would cut out the primary for-profit aspects of the current health care sys-

tem. By putting all health care funds into a single pool and sidestepping multiple insurance companies, other industrialized nations cover *all* citizens for much less money per person than in the United States.

The public hearings on three or four bills (including our Wisc. Health Security Act) announced on page 1 of this newsletter are a reaction in part to these referenda results.



Two Coalition Leaders Honored

Two leaders of the Coalition for Wisconsin Health received honors recently.

In December, Paul Kusuda was one of two people named as a “Community Change Maker” at the Wisc. Community Fund’s 10th Annual Award Ceremony. Paul is a member of the Coalition’s executive board and a main author of the Wisconsin Health Security Act. Some months earlier he was one of two recipients of the 2006 Dane County Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Recognition Award.

“After retiring from the Department of Health and Human Services, Paul has invested his time as an activist regarding aging and senior citizens, serving on

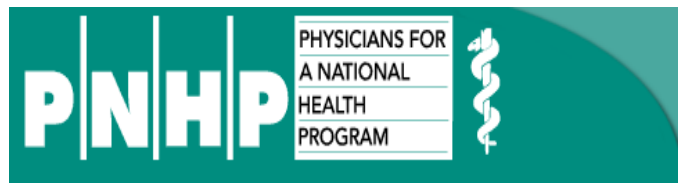


numerous councils,” wrote the Wisc. Community Fund. “As an activist promoting Asian-American rights and culture, Paul has provided leadership to the Wisconsin Organization for Asian-Americans, and is a contributing writer to *Asian Wisconsin*.”

In November, the Lodi Chamber of Commerce named George Robson the 2006 Citizen of the Year. They noted that he became a minister in 1952 and continues to serve as a part-time pastor of the Lodi United Methodist Church. The announcement posted on a Chamber member’s website identified George’s many contributions, including as longtime “treasurer for the Coalition for Wisconsin Health - working for universal health care.”

Like Paul, George received another honor in the past two years. In mid-2005, the Wisconsin United Methodist Federation for Social Action named George one of the two recipients of their Perry Saito Award “for his consistent and admirable leadership in the Coalition for Wisconsin Health and advocacy for Health Care for all people.”

See the website of our parent organization, www.pnhp.org for news and analyses of developments at the federal level and in other states.



Broadcast Broadens Our Base

On January 3rd, the guest for one hour of Joy Cardin’s Wisconsin Public Radio show was Jack Lohman, who compellingly called for the kind of universal health care offered by our closest foreign allies. Jack is a “center-right Republican” who started and owned his own health care business for 25 years, a cardiac monitoring lab. He sold the company in 2004 and retired, but his persistent advocacy keeps him active in health care in a different way.

Jack shared one of the responses he received, which came via e-mail:

“I listened to your interview on Wisconsin Public Radio. In fact, I have listened to it several times. As a small business owner, (2 1/2 employees) I find that health care is killing my business. I pay \$1,300 per month and I have a \$5,000 deductible. My wife and I are raising a granddaughter and if all three of us get sick in any year we will pay \$15,000 in out of pocket expenses alone, not counting premiums. I have had a real change of heart considering some sort of national health insurance. I think that it is something that will have to happen. The current

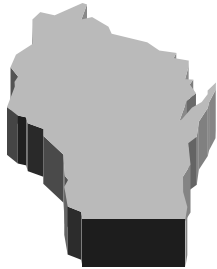
trends are unsustainable. My business is bleeding red ink right now because of health care costs. The only thing that keeps me going is the knowledge that I will be eligible for Medicare in a few years. At that point my business will again be profitable.”

If you or anyone you know has a similar experience to relate, feel free to let us know—particularly if it would be okay to include the story in a future newsletter. To listen to the interview with Jack, go to <http://clipcast.wpr.org:8080/ramgen/wpr/jca/jca070103c.rm>.

COALITION FOR WISCONSIN
HEALTH
AFFILIATE OF PHYSICIANS
FOR A NATIONAL HEALTH
PROGRAM
1202 Williamson Street
Madison WI 53703

ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED

*On the Web at
WisconsinHealth.org*



Office phone:
608-663-8322

The date on your address
label (if any) is the expira-
tion date of your dues.

Join us!

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health

Mission: People first in health care

I want to become a member
(\$25 for individuals/households)*

My organization wants to join
(\$60 for organizations)*

I am renewing a membership
 I am making an additional donation
of \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____

State/Zip _____ Phone _____

E-mail address(es) _____

Add me to Health Security Network e-mail list; my Assembly Representative is _____

Organization _____

* Call 608-663-8322 about lower rates for individuals and organizations with limited incomes

*Because we are
an affiliate of
Physicians for a
National Health
Program, a
501(c)(3) or-
ganization, your
contribution is
tax-deductible.*

Mail to: Coalition for Wisconsin Health/PNHP, PO Box 1453, Madison WI 53701