



Health Care Is A Right!

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Recent statistics

- 72.2% of Wisconsin's uninsured are above the federal poverty line.
- 11.1% of white adults and 20.8% of African-American adults in Wisconsin are uninsured.
- Wisconsin has had a higher percentage of uninsured adult workers who are Hispanic than all other Big Ten states except Illinois.

Standing-Room-Only Forum in Beloit

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health's main event this year for national "Cover The Uninsured Week" in early May was a major public forum in Beloit, at the Merrill Community Center. Thanks to numerous cosponsors, we were able to offer a free meal to the packed room before opening remarks from Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin.

The keynote speaker was Claudia Fegan, MD, Medical Director of the Fantus Health Center in Chicago and immediate past president of Physicians for a National Health Program. She co-authored the book *Universal Healthcare: What the United States Can Learn from the Canadian Experience*.

Following Dr. Fegan's



Rep. Baldwin opens the forum.

talk the audience heard from and posed questions to a panel consisting of Judy Robson, RN, State Senate Minority Leader; Chuck Benedict, MD, State Representative; Richard Perry, Executive Director, and

Jonas Lee, MD, Medical Director, both with the Beloit Area Community Health Center; Katie Crawley, aide to U.S. Senator Russ Feingold; and Sarah Benedict Ansteatt, aide to Rep. Baldwin.

Much of the discussion focused on ways to deal with federal and state policymakers who resist even the most modest reforms of our health care system and who work to undercut programs like Medicaid. There was so much energy in the room that we will pursue follow-up activities in Beloit and similar forums around the state more often than we have recently.

Invaluable assistance leading up to the Beloit forum was provided by Regina Dunkin, Executive Director of the Merrill Community Center, Prof. Marion Field Fass of Beloit

Petition Drive Underway!

Inspired by the campaign for universal health care in Massachusetts that garnered 70,000 signatures of supporters, this year the Coalition for Wisconsin Health started a petition drive of its own. Thanks to members and new friends across the state the first

1,500 signatures streamed in speedily, and the pace has accelerated in the last month. Now we need all the help possible to publicize this petition drive and get the signatures needed – can we get 70,000? Please consider circulating it, and help us spread the word

about it!

The petition reads: "I call on the people of Wisconsin and the State legislature to create a single payer system of universal health insurance that provides all Wisconsin residents with

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Legislative Update

As Senator Mark Miller prepares to reintroduce our Wisconsin Universal Health Program legislation this summer, we need to help him recruit new cosponsors for the bill, LRB-2576 (it will get a new number when introduced). **We could really use your help!**

If you live in the district of a legislator not named here, please ask him or her to cosponsor our bill via the toll-free Legislative Hotline, 1-800-362-9472 (and let us know when you

make the attempt). If you are unsure who your legislators are, the Hotline staff can tell you.

We would be particularly delighted to see Republican legislators added to the list.

Other cosponsors of the WUHP in the 2003-2004 legislative session who have returned in 2005 are Representatives Leon Young, Mark Pocan, and Terese Berceau, and Senators Tim Carpenter, Spencer Coggs, and Fred Risser.



Newly elected Rep. Chuck Benedict, a physician who took part in our Beloit forum (see page 1 article), has already agreed to sponsor the bill.

CWH Takes Part in Mental Health Event

On April 19, the Coalition for Fairness in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Insurance (the Coalition for Fairness, for short) held a statewide strategy session in the State Capitol. Participating for the Coalition for Wisconsin Health were Rich Bogovich and Drs. Linda

and Gene Farley. Describing the AFL-CIO's Wisconsin Health Care Plan, which would cover all workers, was Joanne Ricca.

Coalition for Fairness members debated whether to support the CWH's Wisconsin Universal Health Program, the AFL-CIO

plan, other multifaceted plans, or a standalone bill to achieve mental health and substance abuse "parity" under the law, i.e., that such coverage would be no more restrictive than coverage for physical illnesses. Parity is just one of many pluses of the CWH plan.

Challenge Grant Issued, And Met!

In late 2004 anonymous benefactors issued a "challenge grant" to Coalition for Wisconsin Health members: All dues renewals and other donations through March would be

matched by a lump sum donation of up to \$4,000.

The challenge was met, with room to spare, by contributions of various amounts. They came from about 10% of the people on

our mailing list, which includes many non-members.

As a result, this year's CWH budget is on a pace to be three times larger than last year's. Our thanks again goes out to all donors!

Petition (continued from page 1)

comprehensive coverage (including prescription drugs, long term care and freedom to choose doctors and other health care professionals). It would be funded through an insurance trust fund that uses both public and private monies that are currently spent for health care in Wisconsin. The financing for the program

would be more cost efficient than the present system." The petition can be printed via our website,

www.wisconsinhealth.org.

People can also add their name to the petition via e-mail by sending their name and street address to WiscHealth@aol.com. They should let us know in that message whether they

would like us to provide an occasional e-mail update. For example, we will report whether the Massachusetts referendum to add health care as a constitutional right receives the necessary 50 votes at an August 24th constitutional convention, which would authorize putting that choice on the November 2006 ballot.

Mental health and substance abuse "parity" is when insurance coverage for these services is no more restrictive than coverage for physical illnesses.

New CWH Executive Board

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health has a new Executive Board, with some returning officers, for 2005:

Chair: **Art Taggart**, Executive Director of the Epilepsy Foundation of South Central Wisconsin.

Vice Chair: **Linda Farley, MD**, Physicians for a National Health Program.

Secretary: **Nancy Johnson**, Dane County SOS

Senior Council.

Treasurer: **George Robson**, Wisconsin United Methodist Federation for Social Action, and Madison Area Democratic Socialists of America.

Immediate Past Chair: **Estelle Katz**, Milwaukee Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

There are also three

new “**At Large**” members on the Executive Board:

* **Roger Chapman**, National Spinal Cord Injury Association - South Central Wisconsin Chapter.

* **Paul Kusuda**, Wisconsin Chapter, Japanese American Citizens League.

* **Peter Muñoz**, Executive Director of Latinos United for Change and Advancement (LUChA).

The fine print credits the idea for this cartoon to the Coalition for Wisconsin Health’s Secretary, Nancy Johnson.



Medical Students Provide Large Audience at UW

At the University of Wisconsin Medical School on May 3rd, Claudia Fegan (see top story, page 1) and Jane Truscott (see speakers bureau article, page 5) were among the speakers at an energetic forum on health care reform. There were 135 health professionals, including students of medicine, nursing, pharmacy and basic science research as well as faculty and community physicians in atten-

dance. The medical student turnout was particularly impressive since it was the beginning of final exam week.

Dr. Fegan began the program with an enthusiastically received presentation on the “Impact Of Corporatization On The Delivery Of Health Care And The Need For Univer-



Dr Claudia Fegan

sal Health Care.” A panel discussion was then moderated by Meg Gaines from the UW Law School. There was excellent interchange among the panel, Claudia Fegan and the audience. The panel consisted of Jane Truscott; Javier Nieto, MD, Professor and Chair of Population

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Feingold, Baldwin Each Broach Bipartisanship

U.S. Senator Russ Feingold and Rep. Tammy Baldwin were each the lead authors of the Coalition's Wisconsin Universal Health Program legislation during their stints in the State Legislature, and they are each continuing to work for a similar nationwide program in Congress.

On April 28, Senator Feingold and Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, introduced S. 934, the Reform Health Care Now Act. If adopted, it would force Congress to take up the issue of health care reform in a meaningful way by a date certain. During that time, any legislation that would cover at least 95% of Americans and not increase the federal deficit would qualify for a speedier approval procedure. We expect a universal plan would qualify because many industrialized nations cover their entire populations at close to *half* the cost of America's for-profit system.

Meanwhile, Rep. Bald-

win has similarly been approaching Republican colleagues about opportunities to find common ground on health care reform. On May 4 she reintroduced her ideal program, the Health Security for All Americans Act (H.R. 2133), as she has done every session in which she has served.

Rep. Baldwin is also among the 45 House sponsors of H.R. 676, the U.S. National Health Insurance Act/Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act, authored by Rep. John Conyers, Jr. of Michigan. It would provide free health care to all individuals residing in the United States and in U.S. territories. It would give people freedom to choose from participating physicians and institutions while covering all medically necessary care, such as primary care and prevention, prescription drugs, emergency care, and mental

health services. Only public or nonprofit institutions would participate in the program as providers, which could include HMOs that deliver care in their own

facilities. Financial incentives between HMOs and physicians based on utilization would be banned. Insurers would be limited to selling benefits that are not medically necessary, such as cosmetic surgery.



Feingold and Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, introduced S. 934, the Reform Health Care Now Act.

Medical Students (continued from page 3)

Health Sciences; Magnolia Printz, a first year medical student whose family has been without health care coverage; Kathleen Vinehout, PhD, Legislative and Policy Analyst for the Farmers Union; and Julie Hecht, representing ABC for Health. The event was video taped by the Medical School so is available for those who are interested.

Sponsors of this event included the following medical student organizations: the American Medical Student Association; PNHP's medical student chapter; the Interdisciplinary Partnership for Healthy Communities; Doctoring in Diverse Communities; and the Global Health Interest Group.

Coalition for Wisconsin Health

Mission: People first in health care

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Our Coalition Formally Goes National

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health has become an official affiliate of Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP), which is based in Chicago. This gives us valuable 501 (c)(3) tax-deductible status.

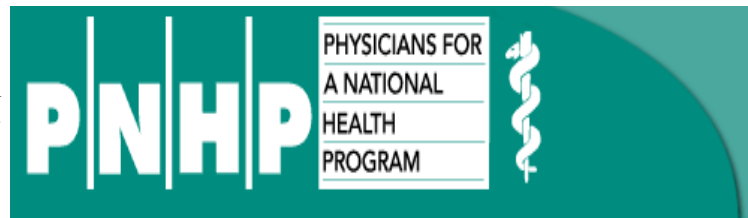
In February, PNHP provided us with the basics for issuing a press release to media outlets across Wisconsin on a new Harvard analysis of bankruptcy data. The study, published by

the journal *Health Affairs*, found that half of U.S. bankruptcies, affecting 2 million people annually, were attributable to illness or medical bills.

The study put the number of personal bankruptcies in Wisconsin in

2004 at 26,720, and the half attributable to illness or medical bills affected 37,360 people in those households.

The PNHP website, www.pnhp.org, is a good source of national health news.



Do We Have Your E-mail Address?

We currently have e-mail addresses for fewer than 20% of the people who are receiving this newsletter. If you aren't sure whether we have your address in our database, please send an e-mail message to us at wishealth@aol.com.

We have only used these addresses to notify people in a particular area of an important health care event—except when they have accepted a specific offer from us to **subscribe to our Yahoo.com group e-mail list**, which results in

them receiving a few timely messages a month. If you aren't already subscribed (the Subject line of every message begins with “[HealthCoalition]”), contact us at the address above about being added.

To hear Ben Merens' May 5th hour on universal health care, visit the Archives at www.wpr.org

Developing a Speakers Bureau

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health is in the process of enlarging its speakers bureau. Present active participants include Estelle Katz, Art Taggart, Rich Bogovich, Jane Truscott, RN, Susan Carson, MD, Rian Podein, MD and Linda and Gene Farley. Some Family Medicine residents and doctors from other specialties have expressed interest in joining.

Our newest participant is Jane Truscott of Eau Claire, who has nursed in Australia, Canada and the

US. Jane's experience in these three countries has made her very assertive in getting the word out across the state about the need for universal coverage. Her comments about the need

for a universal health care program dominated an article in the *Eau Claire Leader Telegram* on May 5th, and she was on Ben Merens' Wisconsin Public Radio show for an hour.

We are seeking new potential speakers bureau participants, especially in the north. The commitment isn't a demanding one — a spokesperson might only be asked to give one or two talks in a



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States Lead the Way on Reform

In our last newsletter we reported on progress toward universal coverage in Massachusetts, Georgia, and California. Action by state governments from coast to coast is on the rise in part because of the failure at the federal level to help the uninsured—in fact, recent federal decisions, such as on Medicaid, are steps in the *wrong* direction.

States where there have recently been major steps toward health care for all include:

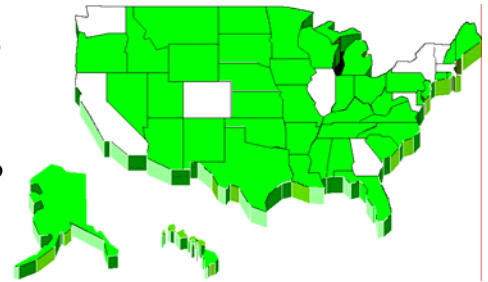
Illinois. They are beginning to implement their "Health Care Justice Act," which is spurring similar legislation in other states. The law established a two-year process designed to build grassroots support, beginning with public forums in mid-July, for the detailed health care system overhaul proposal due to be generated by early 2006. Already agreeing with the reform concept are major hospitals, physicians associations, the Chicago Chamber of Commerce, labor-management councils in a number of cities, and some large employers. A major faith-based campaign has also been launched to advance this effort.

Washington State. Activists are optimistic that the Governor will include in her proposed budget a task force or commission on health care access, delivery and financing that would look to California's Health Care Options program as a model. After eight years of partisan gridlock, the current political leaders are expected to be on the same

page about taking this first step toward universal health care.

New York. Optimism is also rising about a universal health coverage commission in New York, which is being monitored carefully by Physicians for a National Health Program. A proposal in the Assembly would direct this commission to oversee independent cost-benefit studies of various public and private sector-based approaches to providing health care to all state residents, and examine how to control health insurance costs for small businesses and the self-employed. A Senate Republican has introduced a related bill directing such a commission to assess the extent of uninsurance in the state.

Maryland. The legislature approved the Fair Share Health Care Fund Act, which would expand access to affordable health care for many Maryland working families by requiring large, profitable corporations to pay their fair share of their employees' health care. This "pay or play" proposal, which was aimed primarily at Wal-Mart, would require large employers to either provide adequate health care benefits for employees, i.e., "play," (as in "play fair") or *pay* the state government to do so. This legislation has garnered national attention but the Governor vetoed it in May. An attempt to override the veto isn't possible until January.



Colorado. Broad, bipartisan support for major health care reform was demonstrated when the Legislature voted resoundingly to create an inclusive State Health Care Reform Assembly charged with creating legislation in two years that would guarantee health care for all Coloradans without costing more than is currently being spent on health care there. As in Maryland, the Governor vetoed this legislation in May. Colorado's legislative session ended prior to the veto, but the overwhelming vote in favor of creating this assembly gives ample reason to be optimistic about enactment in 2006.

Vermont. The "Green Mountain Health" proposal approved by the House in April would have created a single payer style system with details to be worked out later. The Senate weakened the legislation before the two legislative bodies forwarded the remnants to the Governor. By the time you read this the bill has probably been vetoed. Nevertheless, current legislative leaders were swept into control with health care among their highest priorities, so they will have the rest of 2005 to build a veto-proof case for major health care reform.

Other states will be watching Illinois as it begins to implement its Health Care Justice Act.

Methodist Group Honors CWH Treasurer

At a gathering of the Wisconsin United Methodist Federation for Social Action on June 13, one of the two recipients of their Perry Saito Award was “Rev. George Robson for his consistent and admirable leadership in the Coalition for Wisconsin Health and advocacy for Health Care for all people.” George has been active in our coalition since 1993 and has served multiple terms as treasurer.

He lives in Lodi, in Columbia County.

The award is named for a revered Methodist minister with Wisconsin ties who had been incarcerated at one of our nation’s Japanese-American internment camps during World War II as a young college student.

In conjunction with the award, coalition employee Rich Bogovich was given the opportunity to provide a status report to the audience

of 70 people on the campaign for universal health care in Wisconsin.



Monthly Membership Meetings

CWH membership meetings are usually at our office at the Social Justice Center in Madison, from 1:00 to 3:00 on the third Thursday of each month. Some members expressed interest in

experimenting with evening meetings to accommodate members who cannot get away from their jobs on a weekday afternoon. We changed our June meeting to 5:00-7:00 and it didn’t make a

difference, but we may try this again in the fall. Holding some meetings in Milwaukee, as in the past, is also being considered. Let us know your thoughts about these changes.

Coalition Welcomes Employee, Intern

After relying solely on many committed volunteers for a number of years, in December the Coalition for Wisconsin Health hired a part-time employee, Rich Bogovich. He was a policy aide to State Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) for seven years on such issues as homelessness, hunger, and health care. Rich subsequently worked for the National Environmental Trust and other environ-

mental organizations.

Rich currently splits time between the Coalition and one of its long-time organizational members, the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin.

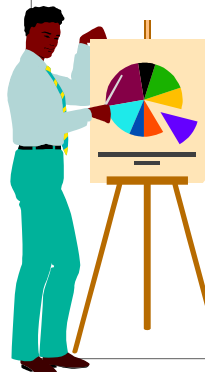
Rich’s duties with the Coalition include helping with media and public speaking outreach, event planning, grant-writing, and other fundraising.

This summer the Coalition also has an intern,

Allison Oldfather, a student at Barnard College in New York. She is from the Twin Cities and has relatives in Wisconsin. Allison plans to attend medical school and possibly also get a master’s degree in public policy.

One of her projects with CWH will be to develop a grid comparing the Coalition’s Wisconsin Universal Health Program with other reform proposals in the state.

Available soon will be a grid comparing the Coalition’s Wisconsin Universal Health Program with other reform proposals in the state.



Speakers Bureau (continued from page 5)

year, and would not have to travel far.

The CWH central office will provide

handouts, a PowerPoint presentation, slides or transparencies, and current members will travel to a location convenient for new participants to help prepare them to speak on the subject.

If you would like

to become a CWH representative or think you may be able to recruit other spokespeople, please let us know.

Also contact us if you can line up speaking engagements for us in your area.

**COALITION FOR
WISCONSIN HEALTH**

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**ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED**

On the Web:
www.WisconsinHealth.org



CWH office phone:
608-663-8322

The date on your address label (if any) is the expiration date of your dues.

Join us!!!

The Coalition for Wisconsin Health
Mission: People first in health care

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