



# LOCAL 15 UNITY NEWSLETTER

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## Special Unity

The IBEW Office in Washington DC, Local 15, along with the State AFL-CIO are backing the Health Care Reform Bill that will be voted on this Sunday.

We are asking all our members to contact their U.S Representatives and encourage them to vote for this Historic must needed change to Health Care that will benefit 95% of all Americans.

Please read pages 2 and 3 of this Unity.

Your support is very much appreciated.

## **AFL-CIO Calls for Immediate Action by Unions, State and Local Labor Federations To Pass “The Affordable Health Care Reconciliation Act of 2010”**

Union members and all working families need immediate action that controls health costs and outlaw insurance abuses – things that only the federal government can do.

After a lot of deliberation by our national unions, the AFL-CIO has decided today to put our strong, active support behind the president’s health care bill. After 60 years of fighting for health care reform, we are convinced that now is the time to say “Yes.” This health care bill is good for working families—now and even more in the future.

It is not a perfect bill. But we are realistic enough to know it’s time for the deliberations to stop and for progress to begin. And we are idealistic enough to believe this is an opportunity to change history we can’t afford to miss.

The “reconciliation bill” now before Congress is a solid, credible beginning towards complete health reform – not a baby step or a half-measure, but a comprehensive reform bill that will set our country on a path to health care that really works for working families. Thanks to President Obama’s leadership, and that of Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Reid, the reconciliation bill fixes major flaws in the Senate version of health reform legislation:

1. It eliminates 80% of the excise tax that would have penalized working families and,
2. It substitutes in its place a progressive tax on the wealthy that requires Medicare contributions be paid on unearned income for the first time.
3. It cuts brand name drug prices for Medicare beneficiaries by 50% in 2011 and closes the Medicare prescription drug “donut hole” completely by 2020.
4. It increases subsidies to purchase health insurance for the low and moderate income.

If this legislation is not enacted, the bottom will fall out of existing health coverage in short order. A study released this week found that, if action is not taken now:

- Spending by individuals and families for their share of insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs will increase 79% by 2020.
- Employer premium spending will jump by 98%.
- The uninsured population will increase by 10 million people by 2015 and nearly 20 million by 2020.
- More than half of the growth in the uninsured will come from moderate and middle income families.

But this doesn't have to happen if members of Congress **stand up for their constituents** and **stand up to the insurance industry** by voting to pass health reform legislation in the coming days. The bill now before Congress has a wide range of health insurance reforms, that would :

- Save families between \$2000 a year (CBO) and \$3000 (Business Roundtable) in premium payments by 2019.
- Cap out of pocket costs and eliminate insurance company limits, both annual and lifetime
- Effectively end medical bankruptcies – now running 700,000 a year in the US, two-thirds of which involve “fully insured” people – by eliminating insurance limits and capping out-of-pocket costs.
- Covers an additional 32 million people, or 95% of the population
- Ban coverage denials or higher rates due to pre-existing conditions
- Outlaw practice of insurers dropping coverage when someone files a claim or is diagnosed with a condition requiring expensive treatment
- End gender discrimination in setting insurance rates
- Establish a procedure to review insurance premium increases and take action against unreasonable rate hikes.

**The top priority members of Congress are listed on the attached sheet. Please generate as many union leadership calls as possible on Friday, March 14, and Saturday, March 15 urging your Representative in no uncertain terms to vote for the House Affordable Health Care Reconciliation Bill.**

The House Energy & Commerce has an excellent district-by-district breakdown of the impact of the reconciliation bill, with lots of facts and figures. Check it out before you speak with your member of Congress, at [http://energycommerce.house.gov/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1924:benefits-of-health-care-reform-district-by-district-impact&catid=169:legislation&Itemid=55](http://energycommerce.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1924:benefits-of-health-care-reform-district-by-district-impact&catid=169:legislation&Itemid=55)