



COUNTDOWN

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Summer 2005

Way to Go, Dirigo! Big Win in Maine

Two years ago, the citizens of Maine won a breakthrough victory in their struggle to control staggering increases in health insurance costs that had reached crisis levels. Maine was among five states with the highest premium increases in the nation. The ranks of Maine's uninsured were growing, and the mounting cost of uncompensated hospital care was pushing insurance premiums still higher.



(R to L) Maine AFL-CIO President Ed Gorham and Sec.-Treas. Ned McCann, Mainers for Health Care Coordinator Nina Quinion and CAHC Executive Director Joe Ditre celebrate latest Dirigo victory.

Maine moved to solve the crisis by enacting the landmark 2003 Dirigo Health Reform Act. The Act created Dirigo Health, a universal health coverage plan with the explicit

goal of providing every man, woman, and child in the state with access to high quality,

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'Countdown' to Universal Coverage

In three states, the countdown to universal health care has begun. Other states are monitoring the progress of Illinois, Maine and Massachusetts while gearing up for their own campaigns.

In Illinois, the countdown began last August when Gov. Blagojevich signed into law the Health Care Justice Act.

In Maine, the countdown began two years ago when state legislators passed the Dirigo Health Reform Act.

In Massachusetts, the countdown got underway when a petition of more than 70,000 citizens from nearly every town in the state brought the Universal Health care Amendment to the 2004 state Constitutional Convention where it was approved by 153 of 200 delegates.

In Vermont this past spring the legislature passed the Green Mountain Health Bill that would have created an affordable system of health care for all in the state, but the countdown was abruptly halted when the governor vetoed it. ☹

That's why we've named this newsletter The America's Agenda Countdown... Unlike the slumbering federal reaction to the health care crisis, the clock is ticking and excitement is building in state-by-state universal health care campaigns around the country. That's where the action is and through this newsletter we intend to keep you aware of impending breakthroughs and the people and organizations making it happen.



Here Comes California!

Excitement is mounting for health care reform activists in California where the State Assembly has joined with the Senate in approving a bill to establish a state-wide universal health insurance system. Legislators were bolstered by a recent report from the Lewin Group that shows universal health care would save California \$343 billion in health care costs over the next ten years.

Advocates are mobilizing to overcome expected opposition from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the health insurance industry.

Petition Drive in Ohio

Ohio's Single-Payer Action Network (SPAN) is planning a massive petition effort during the Ohio State Fair in Columbus August 3-14. SPAN is engaged in an initiative petition campaign to put the Health Care for All Ohioans Act on the November ballot.

For the first step, volunteers must collect at least 97,000 valid signatures from at least 44 counties around the state, said SPAN Ohio Secretary Jerry Gordon. "Our experience in collecting signatures over the past months has been this: almost everybody signs immediately when asked—so many people have been victimized by the present system that they jump at the chance to do something positive and constructive about replacing it." ☺



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President's Message

Doug Dority
President,
America's
Agenda



Labor Is the Catalyst

The Republican-controlled Congress keeps voting down any increase in the deplorably-low federal minimum wage, but the states – Red ones as well as Blue ones – are taking action on their own. In the past two years 18 states have approved raises for the most poorly paid Americans, and thanks to their concern a higher minimum wage is becoming a standard policy across the U.S.

There is a lesson here for health care activists frustrated at the indifference of our federal government to a collapsing health care system. Don't let your anger at the feds cloud your vision to what the states are doing. That's where the action is.

States have long prized their role as the "laboratories of democracy," local laws leading the way to federal legislation. Social Security evolved from a 1911 Missouri pension program for widows, and federal labor law stemmed from state efforts demanding basic accountability. The federal "CHIPS" program began as a Massachusetts plan to provide health insurance to children of low-income families. Several more states adopted it before Congress federalized the program in 1997. In recent years, states have taken the initiative in pooling residents without health insurance so they can negotiate with drug manufacturers for bulk discounts—a plan based heavily on the Maine Rx program.

Canada's health system began with an experiment in Saskatchewan to ensure health care for everyone. The Canadian labor movement was the catalyst that carried the struggle for universal health care from Saskatchewan to the other providences. Province after province followed Saskatchewan's example until the demand for universal care became an irrepressible force the government in Ottawa no longer could ignore.

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Massachusetts: Constitutional Amendment Gaining Momentum

In 1988, Massachusetts actually passed a universal health care bill. Governor Michael Dukakis signed it into law – only to have it rescinded by the governor who succeeded him.

A large majority of Massachusetts residents are saying they want health care for all, again. And this time, they don't want to allow anyone to take it away. A recent poll shows that by a 4 to 1 margin, Massachusetts voters favor a state constitutional amendment that will "lock in" health care for all by requiring the state to ensure that affordable, comprehensive health coverage is available to every state resident.

The campaign for a universal health care amendment began in the fall of 2003. In just eight weeks, a coalition of doctors, nurses, patients and their families, small business owners, labor unions, medical students, faith-based groups, community leaders, seniors, and high school students collected nearly 90,000 signatures from 343 communities in every legislative district in the state.

On July 14, 2004, delegates to the state Constitutional Convention, made up of all elected representatives from both houses of the legislature, passed the amendment by 153 to 41 – three times the number needed.

The campaign continues to gain momentum as it faces a second Consti-

tutional Convention vote this year. Massachusetts Jobs with Justice has joined the campaign, as did the American Medical Students Association, and 1,000 physicians of the Boston Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility.

"A half dozen serious health care reform plans are being considered by the state legislature," says Barbara Roop, formerly a senior advisor to Governor Dukakis and co-chair of the constitutional amendment campaign. "There is public pressure for real reform, and there's a good prospect for a breakthrough this year. Voters want their legislators to keep working on the issue until it is solved. And when we achieve affordable health care for all, voters don't want anyone to take it away."

"People are uniting behind this amendment, regardless of which universal coverage proposal they may prefer," adds campaign manager Michael Carr. "The bottom line is, people want a solution. That's why support is so strong."

If the universal health care amendment passes the second "Con-Con" vote scheduled for August 14, it will appear on the General Election ballot in November 2006. We'll keep you posted on our website: www.americasagenda.org. ☺

America's Agenda to Honor Gov. Blagojevich, Joe Hansen

The Congress and the White House have not been able to solve the health care crisis, but beyond the Beltway statewide campaigns for health care for all are picking up steam. Grassroots activists have tapped widespread support, with significant help from courageous and innovative leaders in state government and labor.

That's why America's Agenda will honor Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and UFCW International President Joe Hansen at its first annual Awards Dinner, scheduled for October 11,

2005 at the Capital Hilton hotel in Washington, D.C.

Gov. Blagojevich inherited a \$7 billion budget deficit when he took office, but in balancing the budget he showed he had his priorities in order when he increased funding for health care by more than \$1 billion. "To me, health care is more than a privilege, it's a right," said the governor. Little wonder that last year the Kaiser Family foundation ranked Illinois first in the nation when it comes to providing health care for adults who need it. Early this year, Gov. Blagojevich promised "we'll continue to take every step we can to help make health care more affordable and more acces-

Way to Go, Dirigo! Big Win in Maine

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affordable health care coverage within five years. The plan established negotiated controls over hospital rate increases and promoted statewide health care quality improvements. The cornerstone of Dirigo Health is Dirigo Choice, a public-private partnership that provides relatively low-cost, comprehensive health insurance coverage, with a sliding scale of premium rates based on income.

Right-wing Assault

Little time passed before conservative pundits across the nation were railing at Maine's "socialist" health plan. The DC-based Heritage Foundation set up an in-state front organization, named "The Maine Heritage Policy Center." The National Taxpayers Union, with the help of Grover Norquist (who has been making high profile visits to the state), set up its own local front operation. Both channeled disinformation about Dirigo over internet blogs and the radio waves. Conservative christian radio commentators stepped up attacks on Dirigo.

Out-of-state insurance companies that could no longer compete in the Maine market clamored for a return to an "open insurance market," meaning elimination of basic consumer

coverage standards that Maine requires of health insurance companies seeking to do business in the state.

The ideological right wing of the national Republican Party and its insurance industry allies had Dirigo Health in their sights. They were aiming for a kill—by ambush in Maine's 2005 legislative session.

Late in the 2005 session, opponents to Dirigo rolled out a three-pronged attack. Republican proposals for the first of three legislative bills (LD 1677) would cut state health expenditures, including Medicaid funding, to levels so low they would starve current financing for Dirigo Health. Proposals for a second bill (LD 1577) set out to block future funding for expansion of Dirigo Health coverage. Still a third bill (LD 1496) would accomplish the out-of-state insurers' objectives by dismantling Maine's health insurance consumer protections. Passage of either of the first two Republican proposals would have crippled Dirigo Health. Passage of the third bill would kill it.

"We need a campaign and a media voice to counter the lies and the fear about Dirigo that The Heritage Foundation and Grover Norquist are spreading around Maine."

- Maine AFL-CIO President Eddie Gorham

The Campaign is Launched

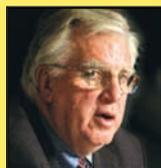
That's when America's Agenda received a call from Maine AFL-CIO President Eddie Gorham. "We need a campaign and a media voice to counter the lies and the fear about Dirigo that The Heritage Foundation and Grover

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sible." A giant step in that direction was passage of the Health Care Justice Act the governor signed into law last August. The new law calls for public hearings in every congressional district, allowing all Illinoisans to participate in attaining the governor's goal of "more affordable and more accessible health care for all."



Gov. Blagojevich



Joe Hansen

tion." Hansen challenged other labor leaders to join him in a battle for universal health care, insisting that no struggle was more important for the physical and economic health of America's working families. In August 2004, the UFCW provided the funding to launch America's Agenda, a new organization designed to help bring about that "political solution" by providing assistance to statewide universal health care campaigns. Under his leadership, America's Agenda has been working actively to build an alliance of labor unions, businesses and other organizations to build a health care movement that eventually will become an irrepressible force across the nation.

More details of the Awards Dinner will be released shortly. ○

Labor Is the Catalyst

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It's happening here, now, state by state.

In recent years, several states have made determined efforts to replace our wasteful for-profit system with universal coverage, but most could not overcome the financial advantages of the powerful health insurance lobby or of corporations that have adopted a competitive strategy based on providing substandard health benefits to their employees.

Which is precisely why America's Agenda: Health Care for All was launched last year—to provide statewide campaigns for universal health care with the critical support they need to win. We may never match the resources dollar for dollar that can be raised by the opponents to universal health care, but labor's capacity to educate and mobilize working Americans state by state is unrivaled by any institution in America. It is time for American labor to accept the challenge taken on by our Canadian counterparts a half century ago. With the support of every union in our movement—and by reaching out together to build alliances with businesses straining under the same crippling increases in health costs—we can win statewide campaigns for universal health care.

As our struggle to win health care for all Americans gains momentum, state by state, we will face deepening resistance from a nationally coordinated opposition. We saw it in Maine, where we faced off with a joint force of national insurance industry lobbyists and in-state front operations set up by the Heritage Foundation and Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform. Our Maine victory would not have been possible without the financial and organizational support America's Agenda received from the Alliance for Economic Justice and some thirteen international unions. We are grateful for their vision and confidence in us. Yet, as the state battles over universal coverage sharpen, our continued success will depend on support of every union in our movement. With it, we will prevail.

Join us. This is a battle that, together, we can and must win.

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Norquist are spreading around Maine,” President Gorham said. “We’d welcome help from America’s Agenda.”

The problem was serious. The conservative media barrage was taking a toll. Approval ratings for Maine Governor Baldacci, the original sponsor of Dirigo Health, had fallen into negative territory. Democratic House and Senate leadership continued to support Dirigo Health, but Democrats held slim majorities in both houses. Several moderate legislators were nervous; support for Dirigo was wavering in the face of the right-wing assault, intensive lobbying, and the falling poll numbers.



(L to R) Mainers for Health Care Coordinator Neena Quirion, Gov. John Baldacci and America’s Agenda Executive Director Mark Blum

America’s Agenda President Doug Dority authorized immediate action. Eddie Gorham and former House Speaker Mike Saxl convened a strategy meeting in Augusta, at which America’s Agenda met with church representatives, health care consumer advocates, and Maine representatives of IAM, AFSCME, and IBEW. A quick consensus was reached not to mount a defensive campaign to “save” Dirigo — a strategy that would have permitted the right wing to frame the campaign issues. Rather, participants at that first meeting decided to launch an assertive campaign to keep Dirigo on a steady course to its five-year goal of assuring that every Mainer would have access to affordable, comprehensive health coverage by 2009. This was a goal we knew Mainers would support.

In less than a week, our Maine campaign was underway. With Eddie Gorham and Secretary-Treasurer Ned McCann representing the Maine AFL-CIO in the state house,

we were confident of outstanding legislative representation. They worked in close coordination with a campaign team of veteran advocacy organizations that included the Coalition for Affordable Health Care (CAHC), Maine Equal Justice, the Maine Council of Senior Citizens, the Maine Women’s Lobby, the Maine Economic Policy Council, and the Maine People’s Alliance.

The core challenge of this campaign would be to clarify the issues at stake for Mainers

“The Governor and the legislative leadership are very appreciative of what America’s Agenda has done for Maine. So are we. We could not have won these victories without the support America’s Agenda.”

- Maine AFL-CIO Sec.-Tres. Ned McCann

and to mobilize their support within the six weeks remaining in the legislative session. America’s Agenda hired Maine Central Labor Council President Neena Quirion to coordinate the ground campaign. Working with the state AFL-CIO, Neena took the campaign to our core constituency: Maine’s union locals.

The Maine AFL-CIO Executive Board endorsed the campaign. Officers from virtually every local affiliate volunteered to serve on the campaign mobilization committee. MSEA/SEIU Local 1989 offered the campaign name “Mainers for Health Care” from its 2003 campaign to pass the original Dirigo Health legislation — and with it, a cache of left-over banners and signs.

The Mainers for Health Care Mobilization Committee added leaders from health care advocacy organizations. The Diocese of Portland and the Maine Council of Churches joined. As the campaign accelerated, professional, progressive, and community organizations from around the state joined.

Mobilizations, Media, and Email Blitzes

Mobilizations followed. A rally and press conference. Mass attendance at legislative committee hearings. Regular media alerts. Press coverage was positive.

Sensing slippage in their support, Republican legislators called a press conference to emphasize their case against future funding for Dirigo expansion. Mainers for Health Care intervened with a quick response mobilization and dominated the event with their own message.

America’s Agenda produced radio spots and secured air time. Messages were targeted toward mainstream audiences and Christian radio listeners, as we prepared to challenge conservative opponents for support of their own core constituencies.

Meanwhile, the campaign tracked all three Dirigo Health bills through the legislative process. America’s Agenda drafted email communications updates for workers before each critical vote. The national and state AFL-CIO emailed them to tens of thousands of Maine union members, urging workers, in turn, to email their state legislators. The IFPTE, immersed in a battle to reverse the Pentagon’s planned closure of the Portland Naval Yards where thousands of its members work, recognized the value of having a Dirigo Health safety net and launched a coordinated email blitz of its own.

Moderate Votes Come Home

Maine legislators, never having received such a volume of constituent correspondence on any pending legislation, were overwhelmed. Democratic leadership asked that the emails be stopped before union members got the impression that Democrats were not supportive of Dirigo Health. The Mainers for Health Care campaign, unconvinced that moderate Democratic support was solid, followed the last wave of emails with a full-page newspaper ad urging legislators to honor the commitment they had made two years before to the health of Maine’s families.

Ultimately, the campaign secured the votes of wavering moderates. An agreement was reached on current health care funding. The version of LD 1577 that finally passed assured future funding needed to expand Dirigo Health on schedule to meet its universal access goal in five-years. The Dirigo-killing bill LD 1496 was itself killed in committee.

The 2005 legislative victories won this June were historic milestones for Dirigo Health. The future of Maine’s universal health coverage plan was in serious jeopardy before the campaign was launched. As a result of the campaign, Dirigo Health is moving forward on schedule toward its objective. State AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Ned McCann reported, “The Governor and the legislative leadership are very appreciative of what America’s Agenda has done for Maine. So are we. We could not have won these victories without the support of America’s Agenda.”

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BUILDING ON SOLID GROUND

The mission of America's Agenda: Health Care for All is straightforward: to win statewide campaigns for universal health care. We are fortunate to be able to build state campaigns on solid ground laid by others over many years. Their contributions have been invaluable assets to our struggle, and they continue to be.

Organizations like *Physicians for a National Health Plan* have built such an impressive and effective network of physician-educators committed to the mission of creating a more efficient and more compassionate health care system for all. There is an indispensable voice of professional experience from the front lines of the medical system. *The Universal Health Care Action Network* has created a supportive community of state-based citizen activists that enables sharing of information, ideas and experience that is essential to building a universal health care movement in America. The work



of *Families USA* in exposing, documenting and fighting against the inefficiencies, inequities and injustices in America's current health system is a vital contribution. The comparative health care policy analysis done by the *National Coalition for Health Care* provides an important resource for state, as well as national, struggles for universal health care reform. New think tanks like the *Center for American Progress* are strengthening the movement with fresh thinking about strategy and solutions.

America's Agenda is privileged to build on the work of organizations like these, and to collaborate and do joint work with them whenever it advances our common goals. We salute them for the important contributions they have made to advancing affordable, comprehensive and high quality health care for every American. ○

Women's Medical Group Invites America's Agenda to Conference

The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA), the oldest and largest multispecialty organization of women in medicine, recently invited America's Agenda to its 2006 Annual Meeting to talk about the state-by-state approach to health care reform. "We are very much looking forward to the America's Agenda presentation at our meeting in Tucson, Feb. 16-19, 2006" said AMWA Marketing Director Dr. Jill Pierce. "The state-by-state strategy is a very attractive and practical approach to a complicated problem."

Health care access for all is a "long-term and deep commitment" for AMWA, according to Pierce. *AMWA's Position Paper on Universal Access to Health Care and Health System Reform* is posted at the website, www.amwa-doc.org, and represents the organization's work nationally and locally to extend care to every citizen.

AMWA has a 90-year history of advocating for issues that impact women and their families and that address disparities in access to care. "With nationwide membership, America's Agenda state-by-state approach is appealing to AMWA members," according to Pierce. "It recognizes and accommodates political and strategic differences among states. Furthermore, with the severe time constraints on physicians' travel, this approach gives AMWA members the opportunity to advocate for health care access in their own communities." ○



Gephardt, Bock Join America's Agenda

Former Congressman and Democratic Presidential candidate Richard Gephardt and international business executive Joseph R. Bock are new members of the America's Agenda governing board.

"I've known and admired both Dick and Joe for a great many years and I can't tell you how proud I am to have them working with us at America's Agenda," said President Doug Dority.

Gephardt was House Minority Leader when he retired last year and "in his nearly three decades in the Congress was always steadfast in his support of working families," said Dority. "Health care was a top priority for him and for us and it is, again, with his commitment to helping America's Agenda achieve universal health care state by state."

Dority said Bock is "both a friend and a friendly adversary. When I was president of the UFCW, American Home Products was one of our best union employers. And for good reason: they had Joe Bock running their worldwide labor relations. We used to sit across the bargaining table from Joe, who was tough, but always fair. His integrity is legendary in the industry and I'm just delighted he's going to be helping us on an issue that was always the 800-pound gorilla in bargaining: health care." ○



Linda Chavez-Thompson Keynotes Illinois Campaign Celebration



Linda Chavez-Thompson, Executive Vice-President of the AFL-CIO, and America's Agenda President Doug Dority were in Chicago recently to support and celebrate the Health Care Justice Act. Ms. Chavez-Thompson was the keynote speaker at the launch of the Campaign for Better Health Care's Latino Caucus at its third annual Summer Celebration. ☉

(L to R) UFCW Local 1546 Exec Dir. Jorge Ramirez; CBHC Exec. Dir. Jim Duffett; AFL-CIO VP Linda Chavez-Thompson; UFCW Local 1546 Pres. Ken Boyd; America's Agenda President Doug Dority

Illinois Health Care Justice Act: Let the Hearings Begin

The Campaign for Better Health Care (CBHC)— the largest health care coalition in the state of Illinois—was founded in 1989 on the belief that accessible, affordable, quality health care is a basic human right. Former-State Senator Barack Obama joined forces with CBHC in 2002 and 2003 to hold a series of hearings around the state on the issue of universal health coverage. The hearing culminated in the 2004 passage of the groundbreaking Health Care Justice Act, a legislative roadmap to achieving health care for all Illinoisans by 2007.

Jim Duffett, the CBHC executive director, is a member of a Health Care Task Force that was chosen by the Governor and legislative leaders to hold public hearings this year in all 19 Congressional Districts. In turn, CBHC has requested America's Agenda

support in carrying out public education activities around the hearings in each Congressional District.

Based on those hearings, the Task Force will make recommendations to the General Assembly for implementing an Illinois universal health care plan. The Health Care Justice Act calls on the General Assembly to adopt the Task Force recommendations or to enact an alternative plan to provide affordable health coverage to all Illinois residents by 2007.

Town hall-style meetings that will guide state legislators in their deliberations are expected to get underway in late July. We'll keep you posted on our website: www.americasagenda.org. ☉

Way to Go, Dirigo! Big Win in Maine

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In the last analysis, the victory in Maine belongs to the working Mainers who stood up in unity to win it. "Let's savor this great success...but not for too long," commented Doug Dority, when he learned about the clean sweep on all three bills. "The opponents to universal coverage will be back."

That's for sure. The two sides of the aisle in Maine's term-limited legislature are almost evenly divided, and the Governor faces a reelection race in 2006. Dirigo Health promises to be a major issue in deciding the outcome. ☉

AFL-CIO Features America's Agenda In Health Care Forum

Over the past year, the Department of Professional Employees at the AFL-CIO has been holding a series of valuable noontime forums on various aspects of the health care crisis, bringing in academic and medical experts, economists and grassroots organizers. In early June, America's Agenda had center stage at a DPE forum on the progress of statewide universal health care campaigns. Executive Director Mark Blum invited leaders of the Illinois and Massachusetts campaigns to join him in the discussion. Bad weather canceled the flight of Illinois leader Jim Duffett, but Mark filled in for him, describing a three-step plan mandating universal coverage by 2007 that includes public hearings this year in the state's 19 Congressional Districts. Barbara Roop, co-chair of the Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign, told of progress toward a state Constitutional Amendment requiring the legislature to ensure universal health care.

Don Bechler flew in from California to attend the forum and reported on surprising developments in Sacramento where state legislators were approving a state-wide universal health insurance system. "This says that if you've got your feet in the state, you're covered," said Bechler, a former United Airlines union worker from San Francisco. "No deductibles, no co-pays, no exclusions for immigrants." ☉

Rep. Baldwin Proposes Innovative Federal/State Partnership

While the GOP-controlled Congress ignores the health care crisis to pursue such pressing issues as flag-burning amendments and how to stop George Soros from buying the Washington Nationals baseball team, Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) hasn't lost sight of the possible. She introduced legislation that provides a federal incentive for states to provide affordable health care for their citizens.

"Health care for all is the issue that drove me into public service and the issue that keeps me there," Baldwin said in a statement to America's Agenda. "My Health Security for

All Americans Act would help solve this problem through an innovative federal/state partnership."

Baldwin, a member of America's Agenda's Advisory Committee, promotes co-operation on the state and federal level by building upon existing state health care programs as well as offering federal matching funds to states who adopt the Act early on. Baldwin noted that "America's Agenda plays a key role in moving these efforts forward, creating the grassroots support needed to reach our goal of health care for all." ☉



Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)

Override in January? Governor Vetoes Maryland's 'Wal-Mart' Health Care Bill

Maryland is the first state to pass legislation requiring companies with 10,000 employees or more to either spend eight percent of their payroll costs on health care, or pay a tax to help cover the state's health care program. The "Fair Share Health Care Act" has been dubbed the "Wal-Mart" bill since it is the only employer the new law would affect (three other companies that qualify already pay the necessary amount of health care coverage). As expected, Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich – beneficiary of a \$1000-a-head fundraiser Wal-Mart threw him last December – vetoed it.

Maryland Health Care for All, a coalition of labor, religious and community groups that were the prime movers and shakers in getting the "Fair Share" bill passed, will be encouraging legislators to override the governor's veto when they reconvene next January.

At least nine other states planning legislation similar to "Fair Share" have monitored the rolls of their taxpayer-funded health programs. In seven of those nine, Wal-Mart has had the most employees and dependents who rely on that coverage. ☉



*To Our Founding Members,
Fighters for the health and financial
security of America's families:*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alliance for Economic Justice American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Workers American Postal Workers Union Amalgamated Transit Union Communications Workers of America International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers International Association of Fire Fighters International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Laborers International Union of North America United Mine Workers of America Sheet Metal Workers International Association United Food and Commercial Workers Union
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Thank you for your support.



Doug Dority, President
America's Agenda: Health Care for All



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There they go again!

As America's for-profit health care system collapses, attacks begin on Canada's successful alternative.

Doug Dority commented recently that "every time a Massachusetts or Oregon is on the brink of approving a universal health care plan similar to Canada's, the American media is suddenly awash with stories how awful the Canadian system really is." He noted that these stories "are brilliantly orchestrated by the health insurance industry."

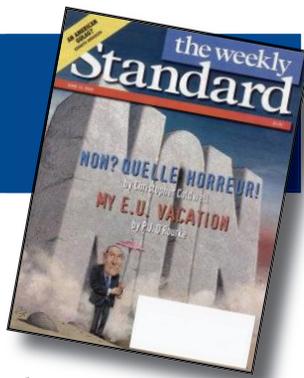
Sure enough, the ultra-conservative Weekly Standard magazine – aghast at the number of states this summer that are seeking to abandon for-profit health care for universal coverage – has published an alarming story of Canada's "socialized medicine on life support."

Predictably, the article perpetuates the myths of "waiting lists" and Canadians streaming across the border to use U.S. health services. What peeves Weekly Standard is that despite this compelling evidence legislators in the United States "continue to flirt with socialized medicine. In recent months, those in Califor-

nia, Maine and Vermont have voted for some type of single-payer system. These policymakers should realize that U.S. health care may have its woes, but the siren song of socialized medicine offers no solution."

Tell that to the 45 million uninsured in this country, a distressing number that is growing at a rate of nearly 5,000 a day.

The conservative media's "bash Canada" campaign began in earnest in 1991 after Harris Wofford's come-from-behind win for the U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania. His winning message: "Health care is a right, not a privilege." Wofford's Senate victory got the attention of the health insurance industry that launched a multi-million dollar campaign to discredit Canada's system, and we've been seeing the result of that effort ever since.



Where do you go for breaking news from the front line battles for universal health care?

To the America's Agenda website, of course.

www.americasagenda.org



America's Agenda is the most comprehensive source of published and broadcast news reports about health care for all – the issues, the stakes, and the coast-to-coast battles to win it.

The America's Agenda blogs carry breaking news and opinions directly from front line campaigns and activists across the country.

Hear first hand accounts. See and listen to campaign media. Share news and opinions from your campaign.

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