

# Why Labor Needs Improved And Expanded “Medicare For All”

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LABOR’S CASE FOR

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*Single Payer National Health Insurance*

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Our nation’s health care is in crisis. This affects not only the 46 million uninsured, but also the insured — including those with health benefits under collective bargaining agreements.

There’s nothing natural or inevitable about the costly, employer-based health insurance system we have in the U.S. In fact, we’re the **only** major industrialized nation that doesn’t provide health insurance for all.

*Fifth edition, September 2006*

This booklet was first published in January 2006 by the New York Metro Chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program. It was prepared by Joanne Landy, M.P.H., Executive Director of PNHP-NY Metro. See the back page for information on ordering copies for individuals or for distribution. The booklet is also available on the Chapter website at [www.pnhpnymetro.org](http://www.pnhpnymetro.org)

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The U.S. spends more money per person on health care than any other nation, yet there are **46 million people without health insurance**.
- 15-30% of private insurance companies' **premiums are wasted** on marketing, CEO salaries, profits, paperwork and bureaucracy rather than health care services.
- **Drug prices** in countries with national health systems are a third to a half lower than in the U.S.
- **Hospitals and doctors spend billions** of dollars dealing with insurance companies, money that could be spent instead on health care.
- **18,000 Americans die every year** because of no or insufficient health insurance coverage

## THE "UNITED STATES NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE ACT," ("EXPANDED & IMPROVED MEDICARE FOR ALL ACT" ) H.R. 676

**C**ongressman John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) (joined by more than 75 co-signers) has introduced HR 676. This single-payer health care program proposes an effective mechanism for controlling skyrocketing health costs while covering all 46 million uninsured Americans and improving health care for everyone.

**HR 676 would cover every person** in the U.S. for all necessary medical care including prescription drugs, hospital, surgical, outpatient services, primary and preventive care, emergency services, dental, mental health, home health, physical therapy, rehabilitation (including for substance abuse), vision care, chiropractic and long term care. HR 676 ends deductibles and co-payments. HR 676 would save billions annually by eliminating high overhead and profits of the private health insurance industry and HMOs, as well as excessive and unnecessary billing expenses of hospitals and doctors' offices.

IN COUNTRY AFTER COUNTRY,  
**labor took the lead** in champi-  
oning universal health insurance.  
Unions here in the United States  
need to do the same. **Labor's par-  
ticipation is essential** for achiev-  
ing needed health care reform.

## LABOR'S STAKE IN HEALTH CARE REFORM

- Employers' attempts to cut back existing health benefits are the leading source of conflict in labor negotiations today.
- Out-of-pocket health care expenses for insured people are rising while their coverage is dwindling.
- Health care costs rise each year at the rate of 10% or more, far above the rate of growth of other things we buy.
- A single payer health care system would save more than \$300 billion annually.
- Under our employer-based system, if you lose your job, you lose your health insurance too – just when you may need it the most!
- Half of U.S. bankruptcies are attributable to illness and medical bills.
- Employees all too often stay in jobs they dislike because they are afraid to risk losing health insurance coverage.
- Labor can win respect and gain support from those who are not in unions by defending not only its own concerns but also the needs of the whole population. Working for universal health care is a very effective way to do just that.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARGUE that labor shouldn't advocate national health insurance because universal coverage would take away a major incentive for joining unions. But countries with universal health insurance have a far higher proportion of the working population in unions than the U.S. Unions can gain better wages, pensions, and working conditions if they aren't sidetracked into bargaining to retain essential health care benefits.

SOME UNION MEMBERS FEAR they would lose the level of benefits they've won if we had national health insurance. In fact, under the current system labor's health benefits are eroding with every contract negotiation. Union members would have a much better chance of keeping decent benefits, even improving them, if they could form alliances and coalitions with others to insist that the government provide coverage for comprehensive, high quality health care for all. Moreover, unions would always retain the right to bargain for benefits not covered by national health insurance.

## IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY – THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE

A single payer national health insurance system would provide coverage for all residents of the U.S. Such a single payer system would replace private insurance premiums and out-of-pocket co-pays and deductibles with progressive taxes that would go into a Health Care Trust Fund.

More than 300 unions and union leaders have come out in favor of U.S. Representative John Conyers's United States National Health Insurance Act ("Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act" – *see a partial list of labor endorsers on pages 6 and 7*). But labor's voice needs to be strong and clear, inviting the American people and U.S. employers to join in the effort to bring a realistic, fair and efficient solution to today's health care crisis: single payer national health insurance.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Urge your local and international union, as well as state and local councils, to endorse H.R. 676, and let us know when you've succeeded.
- Check to see if your member of Congress has co-sponsored HR 676. A list of current co-sponsors, plus the summary and text of the bill, is on U.S. Rep. John Conyers's website: [www.house.gov/conyers/](http://www.house.gov/conyers/)
- Join PNHP and receive our regular email updates — see reverse for an application form.
- Inform your friends, members of your union and community groups about the urgent need for national health insurance (Medicare for All), and ask them to get involved.
- Visit [www.pnhp.org](http://www.pnhp.org) and [www.pnhpnymetro.org](http://www.pnhpnymetro.org) for more information and data.
- Urge your employer to endorse and actively support H.R. 676 and single payer national health insurance.
- Ask your union to invite a representative of PNHP to speak (contact us at 718-222-9266 or [pnhpnymetro@nyc.rr.com](mailto:pnhpnymetro@nyc.rr.com)).

## RESOLUTIONS ENDORSING HR 676

("United States National Health Insurance Act"—Expanded & Improved Medicare for All Act)  
**have been passed by the following union organizations**

For a full list of union organizations endorsing H.R. 676, contact Kay Tillow at [NurseNPO@aol.com](mailto:NurseNPO@aol.com)

- American Federation of Government Employees Local 2028, Pittsburgh, PA, representing 1,700 nurses, other professionals & service workers at two Veterans Administration Hospitals
- Plumbers and Steamfitters HVAC, Local 188, United Association, Savannah, GA.
- United Steelworkers of America, Local 1693, Louisville, KY, amalgamated local representing 1,700 workers
- Local 2322, United Automobile Workers, representing 3,800 workers in Holyoke, Massachusetts
- Washington Alliance of Technology Workers (WashTech), Communications Workers of America (CWA), Local 37083, Seattle, WA
- Local 576, Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA), Louisville, KY
- United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters, Local 630, West Palm Beach, FL
- Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), National Convention, Oct. 2003
- Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), National Convention, May 2006
- Jefferson County Teachers' Association (National Education Association), representing teachers in the public school system, Louisville, KY
- American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 2629, AFL-CIO, representing Louisville Metro Government Employees, Louisville, KY
- Northwest Indiana Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, Hammond, IN
- Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical, Energy International Union (PACE) Local 5-2002, Louisville, KY
- United Steelworkers of America, Local 6787, representing over 3,000 steelworkers in Burns Harbor, IN
- Local 506, United Electrical Workers, Erie, PA, representing 4,000 workers at GE.
- Plumbers, Steamfitters, and Refrigeration Fitters, Local 393, AFL-CIO, San Jose, CA.
- California State Pipe Trades Council, United Association, AFL-CIO, Sacramento, CA
- Local 576 Laborers' International Union Retirees' Council, LIUNA, AFL-CIO, Louisville, KY
- Nurses Professional Organization, Louisville, KY
- Independent State Store Union (ISSU) Haristburg, PA
- Local 2320, United Automobile Workers, Chicago, Illinois, representing nearly 4,000 workers across the country, primarily in legal services and human services.
- Washington Chapter 10, The Retired Public Employees' Council of Washington, AFSCME, Convention September 2004.
- Steelworkers Active Organization of Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 31-9, Chicago, IL
- Local 3310, Communications Workers of America (CWA), representing workers at Bell South in Louisville, KY
- St. Joe Valley Project Jobs with Justice, South Bend, IN
- United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE), Pittsburgh, PA
- American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA), Chicago/Midwest Region
- California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee, Oakland, CA
- National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), Branch 84, Pittsburgh, PA
- Local Lodge 794, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), Albuquerque, NM
- South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council, San Jose, CA, April 2005
- Community Action Program (CAP), 3rd & 4th Areas, Kentucky, United Automobile Workers (UAW)
- Community Action Program (CAP), Southern Indiana, United Automobile Workers (UAW)
- Local 1375, United Steelworkers of America (USWA), Warren, OH, April 19, 2005
- Western Connecticut Central Labor Council, Waterbury, CT
- Local 619, Graphic Communications Conference/IBT, Louisville, KY
- Local 409, Plumbers and Pipefitters, United Association, San Luis Obispo, CA
- Local 6355, Communications Workers of America (CWA), Missouri State Workers Union
- District Council 62, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) representing public employees in Indiana and Kentucky, October, 2005.
- Kentucky State AFL-CIO, Convention, October 2005
- Local 6000, United Auto Workers (UAW), State of Michigan Employees, Region 1A, Retiree Chapter
- Local #36, Sheet Metal Workers, St. Louis, Missouri
- New York Professional Nurses Union (NYPNU), New York, NY
- Central New Mexico Labor Council, Albuquerque, NM
- Building and Construction Trades Council of St. Louis, AFL-CIO, St. Louis, MO
- Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans
- Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO Central Labor Council
- Southeast Missouri Building and Construction Trades Council, Cape Girardeau, MO
- District Council 5, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFSCME, St. Paul, Minnesota
- Local 2222, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Boston, MA. Representing 4000 Verizon workers in the Greater Boston area.
- South Central Federation of Labor, Madison, Wisconsin
- Local 675, United Steelworkers (USW), Carson, CA, representing workers in Southern California and Nevada
- Greater St. Louis Labor Council, AFL-CIO, St. Louis, Missouri
- Allegheny County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Pittsburgh, PA
- Division 4, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), Rail Conference, IBT, Toledo, OH
- Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR), Chapter 20-20, Alliquippa, PA
- Local 2320, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Manchester, NH

59. Local 2321, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), North Andover, MA
60. Local 2322, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Middleboro, MA
61. Local 2323, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Cranston, RI
62. Local 2324, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Springfield, MA
63. Local 2325, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Northborough, MA
64. Local 2326, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Essex Junction, VT
65. Local 2327, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Augusta, ME
66. Kentucky Jobs with Justice, Louisville, KY
67. Lorain County AFL-CIO Federation of Labor, Lorain, OH
68. Beaver-Lawrence Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Beaver, PA
69. Troy Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Troy, NY
70. Southwestern Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council Collinsville, IL
71. United University Professions, Local 2190 AFT, New York State United Teachers Albany, NY
72. Cleveland AFL-CIO Retiree Council, Cleveland, OH
73. Toledo Area Jobs with Justice, Toledo, OH
74. Washington State Machinist Council, International Association of Machinists District #160 (IAM), Seattle, WA
75. Greater Louisville Building & Construction Trades Council, Louisville, KY
76. Pittsburgh Airman Lodge 1044, International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers (IAM), Pittsburgh, PA
77. Santa Clara & San Benito Counties Building & Construction Trades Council, San Jose, CA
78. Local 21 NABET/CWA, National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET)/Communications Workers of America (CWA), Albany, NY
79. Massachusetts State CAP Council, United Auto Workers (UAW)
80. 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, MD, DC, NY State, MA New York, NY
81. AFSCME Retiree Chapter 36, Los Angeles, CA
82. Local 829 United Steelworkers (USW), Owosso, MI
83. Local 2-591 United Steelworkers (USW), Riverview, MI
84. PEF/encon Albany Steward Council (Public Employees Federation/encon) representing Professional, Scientific and Technical employees at the New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Albany, NY
85. North Central Florida Central Labor Council, Gainesville, FL
86. Ashtabula AFL-CIO Retiree Council, Ashtabula, OH
87. Ashtabula AFL-CIO Labor Council, Ashtabula, OH
88. Cleveland Painters District Council 6 Retiree Council, Cleveland, OH
89. Local 1000, American Federation of Musicians (AFM), New York, NY
90. Local 524, International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE), Glens Falls-Saratoga, NY
91. Greater Westmoreland County Labor Council, Greensburg, PA
92. AFSCME Retirees, Chapter 1184, Sub-Chapter 109, Northwest Ohio
93. Albany Central Federation of Labor, Albany, NY
94. Butler County United Labor Council, Butler, PA
95. Solidarity Committee of the Capital District, 302 Centre Dr, Albany NY 12206
96. International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) Local 17, Seattle, WA
97. Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor, Cleveland, OH
98. Local 6000, United Auto Workers (UAW), Michigan State Employees, Lansing, MI
99. Local 196, United Steelworkers (USW), Trenton, MI
100. Local 825, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), River Edge, NJ
101. Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 36-1, Gadsden, AL
102. Tri-County Council of Labor, AFL-CIO, Henderson, KY
103. Greater Bangor Area Central Labor Council, Bangor, ME
104. Pittsburgh Chapter, Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Pittsburgh, PA
105. Philadelphia Chapter, Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Philadelphia, PA
106. Organization of Staff Analysts (OSA/RT), New York, NY
107. District Council 37, American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME) New York City, NY
108. United Steelworkers (USW) Region X Spring Conference, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota, March 2006.
109. Pennsylvania AFL-CIO, State Convention, April 6, 2006.
110. Branch 3126, National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), Royal Oak, MI
111. San Francisco Web Pressmen & Prepress Workers Union Local 4N, IBI/Graphic Communications Conference
112. Ohio State Legislative Board, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET), Rail Conference, IBI, Columbus, OH
113. Greater Louisville Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Louisville, KY, April 2006.
114. Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 9-36 F 5, Cape Coral, FL
115. Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 9-UR 7, Hickman, KY
116. Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 36-2, Gardendale, AL
117. Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 9-ABG 1, Kingsport, TN
118. Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 9-UR 1, Harvest, AL
119. Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter Local 200 Retirees, Iuka, MS
120. Theatrical Protective Union (TPU) Local One, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts (IATSE), New York City, Westchester and Putnam Counties
121. Toledo Area AFL-CIO Council, Toledo, OH
122. Hudson Valley Area Labor Federation, Newburgh, NY
123. District 1199P SEIU, Harrisburg, PA
124. Local 1155, UAW, Birmingham, AL
125. Lodge 1145, IAM, Selkirk and DeWitt, NY
126. Local 2334, AFT, Professional Staff Congress-CUNY, New York City, NY
127. Dayton, Springfield, Sidney, Miami Valley AFL-CIO Regional Labor Council, Dayton, OH
128. Bergen County Central Trades & Labor Council, Paramus, NJ
129. Local Lodge 141, International Association of Machinists (IAM), representing airline workers at Northwest, United, Southwest, and Alaska, Detroit, MI
130. Local 1549, AFSCME, representing 19,000 clerical and administrative workers for the City of New York
131. Local 1180, Communications Workers of America (CWA), New York, NY
132. Retirees Association of District Council 37, AFSCME, New York, NY
133. Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 30-18, Plymouth, Indiana
134. United Steelworkers, USW District 7, Sub-District 4, Northern Indiana
135. United Steelworkers, USW Local 12775, Portage, Indiana
136. International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU), San Francisco, CA, International Convention, May 2006
137. Retirees Council, Bergen County Central Trades and Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Paramus, NJ
138. American Postal Workers Union (APWU), Michigan State Convention, May 2006
139. Local 544, United Auto Workers (UAW), Fisher Body, West Mifflin, PA
140. Northern Kentucky Central Labor Council, Covington, KY
141. CIRSU, New York, NY
142. Local Union 1183, United Automobile Workers, Newark, DE
143. North Bay Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Santa Rosa, CA
144. Greater Glens Falls Central Labor Council, Glens Falls, NY Warren, Washington, Hamilton, and Northern Saratoga Counties
145. Local 50, Plumbers and Steamfitters, United Association (UA), Northwood, OH
146. Local 668, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Harrisburg, PA
147. North Florida Central Labor Council, Jacksonville, FL
148. District Lodge 112, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), Jacksonville, FL
149. Pima Area Labor Federation, Tucson, AZ
150. Florida State Alliance for Retired Americans
151. Lodge 721, IAM, Jacksonville, FL
152. Austin Central Labor Council, Austin, Texas
153. Unified Union Partners, made up of union presidents from VISA 4 (Veterans Integrated Service Network) which includes 10 Veterans Administration hospitals and several VA community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) in PA, Wilmington, DE, and Clarksburg, WV.
154. United Automobile Workers, International Union Convention, June 2006
155. Plumbers Local Union #17, United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry (UA), Memphis, TN
156. Western Kentucky AFL-CIO Area Council, Paducah, KY
157. San Francisco Central Labor Council, San Francisco, CA
158. National Education Association (NEA), July 2006
159. Connecticut AFL-CIO, June 2006
160. Local Union 295, United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry (UA), Daytona Beach, FL
161. Ohio AFL-CIO, July 19, 2006, at Convention in Cincinnati
162. Central New York Labor Council, Utica, NY
163. Local 2313, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Hanover, MA
164. Hawkeye Labor Council, Cedar Rapids, IA
165. Plumbers, Pipefitters and Service Technicians Local 502, United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada, Louisville, KY
166. Local 1L, Amalgamated Lithographers of America, Graphic Communications Conference/International Brother of Teamsters (GCC/IBT Local 1L), New Jersey
167. Central Trades & Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Cape Girardeau, MO
168. Local Union 136, Plumbers & Steamfitters,

(list continued on next page)

United Association, Evansville, IN  
 169. San Bernardino/Riverside Counties Central Labor Council AFL-CIO, Riverside, CA  
 170. United Association of Journeymen & Apprentices of the Plumbing & Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States & Canada (UA), International Convention, August 9, 2006  
 171. Washington-Orange-Lamoille Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Montpelier, VT  
 172. North Dakota AFL-CIO, Bismarck, ND, State Convention, August 2006  
 173. Delaware State AFL-CIO, Newark, DE, endorsed August 2006  
 174. Washington State Labor Council, representing 500 local unions with 400,000 members, endorsing resolution passed at State Convention, August 2006, Seattle, WA

175. Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR), Chapter 11-3, St. Louis, MO.  
 176. Local 547, International Union of Operating Engineers, Detroit, MI  
 177. Mercer County Central Labor Union, Mercer County, NJ  
 178. South Carolina State AFL-CIO, 50th Annual Convention, September, 2006  
 179. Local 3, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Pittsburgh, PA  
 180. Burlington County Central Labor Union, Riverside, NJ  
 181. Wyoming State AFL-CIO, Cheyenne, WY  
 182. Vermont State Labor Council AFL-CIO, Montpelier, VT, September 2006, State Convention  
 183. Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans

(ARA), State Convention, September 2006  
 184. National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), International Union, Washington, DC  
 HR 676 has been endorsed by 184 union organizations including 41 Central Labor Councils and Area Labor Federations and 10 state AFL-CIO's (KY, PA, CT, OH, DE, ND, WA, SC, WY, VT).

For further information:  
 For further information: Kay Tillow, All Unions Committee for Single Payer—HR 676, c/o Nurses Professional Organization, 1169 Eastern Parkway, #2218, Louisville, KY 40217, (502) 636-1551 or (502) 459-3393, nursepo@aol.com Printed in house. Labor donated.

## **COMMUNITY AND LABOR**

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