

CWA Local 1037 Stewards' E-Update



FEBRUARY 3, 2010

It's the 127th issue of CWA Local 1037's weekly update bulletin, designed to highlight campaigns, give updates, and let stewards know about upcoming events. If you have an event or anything that you would like to have us feature, please e-mail Molly at mhurford@cwa1037.org or call 973-623-1828 ext. 220.

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Quote of the Week

“The strongest bond of human sympathy outside the family relation should be one uniting working people of all nations and tongues and kindreds.

-Abraham Lincoln

Local 1037 Up to the Minute



State Worker Shop Steward Meeting

To all of the Stewards who attended, thank you! We'll be posting the fliers that were distributed both in this update and on the website. Please keep checking the website www.cwa1037.org as well as www.cwanj.org to get details on the coming budget fights. Make sure that you spread the word!

**DON'T FORGET TO GET EVERYONE TO WEAR RED
ON THURSDAYS!**

(Take pictures and email them to tech@cwa1037.org)

State Workers: to view all of the I'll Be There forms, visit the State Worker page on our website.



Law and Public Safety at 124 Halsey Street in Newark show their colors! Don't forget to send us your pictures from Wear Red Thursdays!!

Join the NJ State Worker Shop Steward Facebook Group!

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=251840798877>

If you're a shop steward and a state worker with a Facebook, join our group in order to connect with other stewards and stay informed about upcoming events and news.

Shop Steward Shirts Are Here!

In case you start to run out of things to wear for "Wear Red Thursday", the Shop Steward shirts have arrived and are being mailed to all Shop Stewards who ordered them. If you did not attend the Shop Steward Conference and haven't placed your order, please contact the Local office. If you get compliments on your shirt from your co-workers, tell them they will soon be able to order them directly from the Local 1037 website. They won't say "Shop Steward", of course, but they can get them with their name and the 1037 logo!

Request for Donated Sick Leave

Theresa Saunders, a Local 1037 Shop Steward from the Dept of Health in Newark is on the State's Donated Leave List. She has been battling recurrent cancer for several years and is again on donated leave. Please consider donating leave time to her.



Health Care Updates

Generally, the mood in Washington is very positive in terms of completing comprehensive national health reform. Our understanding is that Leadership in the House and Senate are working on a compromise bill that would fix key problems with the current Senate bill (including the excise tax). Once the compromise bill is negotiated, the plan is for the House to pass the Senate bill and then for BOTH the House and Senate to pass the "fix it bill".

We need to keep the pressure on Congress to get this done! Please CONTINUE to call Members of Congress and urge them to finish reform right!! Please call Senators Menendez (202.224.4744) and Lautenberg (202.224.3224)!

What do we know about the current deliberations?

Last week, the President, Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Reid each reconfirmed their commitment to moving forward with comprehensive health care reform.

The leadership of the House and the Senate are determining the best process for enacting comprehensive health reform; the Obama Administration is also involved.

Since Republicans can filibuster any health reform package put forward, Democrats will likely use a process known as "reconciliation" to move a portion of the health reform legislation through the Senate with a simple majority vote.

Congressional leadership staff believes they will be able to get through the procedural hurdles, but exact process for doing that has not yet been agreed upon between the House and Senate leadership.

Congressional leadership will keep procedural details secret until all items are worked out. Even members of Congress (and their staff) on key committees may not have access to these discussions. In the meantime, Congressional staff and advocates will continue to have more questions than answers.

What can we expect to hear?

Basically, speculation from the media. Expect the media to portray this lack of publicly-available information as a lack of progress, but we should be skeptical of those assumptions. We should also expect mixed responses from Congressional staff based on varying levels of engagement and the general lack of information available until the course is set in stone by the leadership.

What is likely to happen to enact health care reform?

Congressional leadership will complete their "conference" negotiations about the content of the final health reform bill(s) and determine what legislative vehicles are required.

This will involve passing at least two (maybe more) pieces of legislation nearly simultaneously (items 1 and 2) and could involve additional legislation.

The Senate health reform bill (H.R. 3590)

A "reconciliation bill" that makes fixes to the Senate bill (H.R. 3590), such as --

- Eliminates/reduces excise tax on higher cost health plans
- Improves affordability through the exchange
- Fills the donut hole for Medicare recipients
- Requires employers to contribute to employee coverage
- Improves the Medicaid program
- Creates a national exchange

One or more pieces of narrow legislation that contain items that were agreed to by the House and Senate leadership but that cannot be put into the reconciliation bill because of procedural rules.

Speaker Pelosi has indicated that the House may pass one of these narrow bills in early February, but she has clearly stated that this narrow legislation is not a substitute for comprehensive reform legislation.

The legislation (the reconciliation bill in the Senate; the reconciliation bill and the Senate bill in the House) is passed by each body with majority votes in favor; the President signs the legislation; health reform is enacted.

What timeline are we predicting for all this?

The estimated amount of time to pass the reconciliation bill with the Senate bill is 4 - 6 weeks, assuming both the House and Senate act. Legislation could be sent to the President by the end of March.

What will HCAN be doing during this time?

In DC and the states we'll continue our champions strategy and we will keep working with the House and Senate leadership to urge Members in both chambers to get on the bandwagon and support the plan to move forward on comprehensive reform.

Grasstops calls to the Senate this week and leading up to our big actions in mid-February in which we press Senate Champions and Moderates to make a public commitment to this process and to getting reform done right by passing the legislation described above via majority vote in both Chambers. We will mobilize increasing numbers of people to build an ever-louder drumbeat for finishing reform right.

Keeping up momentum and staying on the offensive with opponents of reform like the insurance companies and Republicans to make sure we clear a path for the Leaders who are trying to get comprehensive reform to the finish line and to prevent stalling or Members losing resolve in the remaining months of this process. Part of the plan is our action in DC on AHIP coming up in early March.

From CWA National

Health Care Reform Efforts Continue, But Quietly

By Bill Salganik



Quiet talks continue in Washington on how to move health reform forward, as the Los Angeles Times reported.

"We're still inside the five-yard line," White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said Sunday, as reported by the Wall Street Journal.

Similarly, CWA and its allies are deciding how best to make reform a reality. Medical and consumer groups also are working to find a way to fix the health system.

On Capitol Hill, "behind the scenes party leaders have nearly settled on a strategy to salvage the massive legislation," the L.A. Times said. "They are meeting almost daily to plot legislative moves while gently persuading skittish rank-and-file lawmakers to back a sweeping bill."

Over the next few weeks, the newspaper said, Democratic leaders may put together a plan to have the House of Representatives pass the Senate's version of the health reform bill, and, more or less simultaneously, have both Houses agree on a series of fixes to the Senate bill.

CWA was among the backers of a new Coalition of Health Care Coalitions announced last week. Other participants include Health Care for America Now, the American College of Cardiology and Families USA. CWA and its partners will continue to seek meaningful reform of the health system without a tax and benefits which would punish working families.