



Labor Extension Bulletin

A Publication of the University of Massachusetts Labor Extension Program
UMASS AMHERST ■ UMASS BOSTON ■ UMASS DARTMOUTH ■ UMASS LOWELL

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The Health Care Reform Debate: Positions and Values

As health care reform—or health insurance reform, as some would have it—is debated in Congress, positions are staked out, interests groups vie for influence and the underlying values that inform the debate are smothered in rhetoric and outrage. Yet it is the conversations that we are not having that are perhaps as important as who will be covered, who will do the covering, who will make decisions about care and who will pay. So far in this struggle over ideology and values it is the Right that has been winning the hearts and minds of what are frequently our members. We have allowed the conversation to be shaped by the tea baggers, right wing talk radio, Fox news who value rampant individualism, the free market and small government. We have not done enough to challenge the media coverage of the disruption of town hall meetings, the charge of “death panels,” the cries of socialism. As the organized voice of working people we must do more.

Labor has taken clear positions on health care reform. Any reform must provide universal coverage. It must control costs, ensure that everyone gets high-quality health care as good or better than they have now, cover preventive care, let people choose their own doctors and other providers, divide responsibility among employers, government and individuals and offer the choice of a public alternative. Labor has also urged that the government be the watchdog on costs, quality and fairness. Underlying these positions is a set of values—union values, yet labor has fallen short of clearly articulating those values and giving members the tools they need to advocate for these positions with their co-workers, families, friends and neighbors.

What are those values? It is the labor movement's emphasis on solidarity and collective action and protection that leads us to advocate for universal coverage. It is our commitment to worker voice and participation in decision-making that requires people choosing their providers and making decisions about their care. It is our firm belief in the differing priorities of corporations vs. workers that leads us to government participation in the health insurance market and as a watchdog. The AFL-CIO has come out strongly in favor of a single payer system, which is not even on the table right now. And it is our fundamental belief that workers, the producers of wealth, are entitled to the basic necessities of life, as well as our intolerance of inequality, that requires a demand for universal coverage.



Photo: Aaron Donovan

On the question of who should pay, the AFL-CIO has supported a shared government, employer, and employee option and has come out strongly against the proposed tax on middle-class health benefits in the Senate version of the bill. This does not come simply out of the desire to protect union member benefits, but rather reflects an underlying belief in an equitable distribution of the tax burden. Labor supports the House position, a tax on the wealthiest earners, who benefited so much from Bush-era tax cuts.

How are we going to have those conversations with our members? We must go beyond the facts and figures - what the real costs are for various proposals, how the burden will be shared, how we plan to maintain existing benefits, how many people need to be covered, etc. We must engage our members around a set of shared values. When we have their hearts as well as their

heads we will have the strength to mobilize in support of true health care reform.

UMass Labor Extension has developed workshops to help you do this work, to frame the health care debate in terms of union values, and then to help you mobilize your members in support of the kind of health care reform that we want and need. For more information contact an extension coordinator.



Both Photos: Labor and community activists rally for quality, affordable health care for all now.

Around THE STATE

Technology and Human Values with a Focus on Technology & the Workplace

Monday evenings - January 25 - May 20, 7:00 - 10:00pm (some weeks will be online or project work)

Cost for 3 Credit Course: Tuition: \$915, (State Employees have tuition remission; Verizon will pay for classes at UMass Lowell)

Location: UMass Lowell

Contact: Susan Winning 978-934-3127 or susan_winning@uml.edu
This course will focus on technology and its impact on the workplace and the workforce. We'll examine a number of case studies, and explore who controls technology, how changes in technology impact employees and consumers, who benefits from the technology and how workers can influence that impact.

Organizers' Roundtable

Second Tuesday of the month, 9:30-11:30 am

Cost: Free

Location: IBEW Local 103

Contact: Bill Corley, 617-436-3710, John Drinkwater, MA AFL-CIO, 781-423-8230

Roundtable discussions on topics of interest to union organizers

Advanced Stewards Training Dates:

February and March, dates TBA

Cost: TBA

Location: Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO, 640 Page Blvd., Springfield

Contact: Jon Weissman, (413) 732-7970 or mail@pvaflcio.org

These classes will run 4 or 5 weeks, one night per week and are for experienced stewards or grievance handlers, or those who have already taken basic stewards training.

UMass Dartmouth Spring Conference

Saturday, March 13, Registration at 8:30, program 9 - 3

Cost: \$25 includes lunch and materials

Location: UMass Dartmouth, Woodland Commons

Contact: Kim Wilson, 508-999-8781

All are invited to a special day which will be a combination of leadership development classes as connected to larger issues in the labor movement.

More details to come in a mailing, or call Kim at the above number.

WILD in the Winter East

Saturday, March 6th, 9 - 1pm

Cost: Free

Location: Boston Area TBA

Contact: Emily at 617-426-0520

This half-day program offers women activists and leaders from labor and community-based worker organizations the opportunity to come together for workshops, discussion and networking.

WILD in the Winter West

Saturday, March 13, 8:30-1:30

Cost: TBA

Location: UMass Amherst Labor Center, Gordon Hall, 418 N. Pleasant St., Amherst.

Contact: Emily Hardt, WILD, (617) 426-0520 or Dale Melcher (413) 545-6166
This half-day program offers women activists and leaders from labor and community-based worker organizations the opportunity to come together for workshops, discussion and networking.

Lilly Ledbetter

March 31, 2010

Cost: Free

Location: UMass Lowell

Contact: Susan Winning 978-934-3127 or susan_winning@uml.edu

Lilly Ledbetter, longtime fighter to close the gap between women's and men's wages, whose equal-pay lawsuit, *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, served as the impetus for the first bill signed by President Obama, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, will be speaking at UMass Lowell at an event open to all.

UMass Dartmouth Legislative Breakfast

Saturday, April 10, 8 am

Cost: \$10 regular, \$5 students/seniors/low income

Location: UMass Dartmouth Woodland Commons

Contact: Diane Cruz, 508-999-8007

This annual event serves as an opportunity to speak directly to SE Mass and Cape elected officials to ask questions and voice our priorities.

Les Leopold Speaking Event

April 29, 6 - 8pm

Cost: Free

Location: UMass Lowell

Contact: Susan Winning 978-934-3127 or mail to: susan_winning@uml.edu
Les Leopold, executive director of the Labor Institute and Public Health Institute in New York, has a new book *The Looting of America: How Wall Street's Game of Fantasy Finance destroyed our Jobs, Pensions and Prosperity, and What we can do about it.*

Worker Memorial Day 5K Race and Walk

Sunday, May 2, registration 8:30 to 9:30, race starts at 10

Cost: \$12 preregistered, \$15 day of race

Location: UMass Dartmouth Ring Rd.

Contact: José Soler 508-999-8796

Come as an individual or make up a team with your union to participate in this annual race, which serves as an important fundraiser for the Labor Center

SPOTLIGHT

struggle to get real health care reform: single payer, universal coverage.

Here in Massachusetts, Mass-Care, the Massachusetts Campaign for Single-Payer Health Care, brings together over 100 organizations, including many unions, to push for a Single Payer system in the state.

"National health reform is going to be disappointing, particularly for Massachusetts," according to Mass-Care staffer Ben Day. "It's not going to control costs, and most of the good things in the national bill we already have here." On the bright side, he adds, "I think it's going to be a big organizing opportunity for states to take the lead on ideals that are faltering on the national stage— sustainable universal healthcare and single payer." To find out more or to get involved, visit their web page masscare.org.

On the national level also, single payer advocates are not giving up. Healthcare Now www.healthcarenow.org is leading the campaign to pass the Conyers Bill (HR 676), which would provide universal national single-payer coverage. HR 676 has been endorsed by over 490 labor organizations, including 39 state federations and 454 unions and central labor bodies.

Here in Massachusetts, endorsers include the state AFL-CIO and many local unions, including Change to Win affiliates and independents.

At this writing, we can't be sure exactly what the health care reform package that ultimately passes through Congress will be, but we are getting a good picture of what will be missing. And it's a lot! But the fight is not over, and organizations on both the state and national level will be carrying on the



Program Notes

■ UMASS AMHERST

This fall the Amherst program, along with the Hampshire Franklin and Pioneer Valley CLCs, once again offered a five-session Basic Stewards Training program for members from six different locals. We offered mobilization training for MNA Region 1 officers and activists, and taught an undergraduate course on Women and Work. As part of our Future of Work efforts the Labor Center hosted a conference on Immigration and the Future of Work. Scholars presented specially commissioned research and activists described efforts to organize in Western Mass immigrant communities. Over sixty-five scholars and labor and community activists attended and engaged with the research on the changing nature of jobs, work and the workforce in Massachusetts. This fall marked the release of Tom Juravich's book, *At the Altar of the Bottom Line*, which will be placed in high school and community libraries around the state as part of the Future of Work project. We also served on the boards of WILD and the UMass Amherst Labor Management Workplace Education Project and continued work with our two area labor councils.

■ UMASS BOSTON

The UMB Labor Resource Center is continuing to "think big and move forward" with our Thinking Big/Moving Forward seminar series. In November, we hosted Dr. Steffi Woolhandler of Physicians for a National Health Plan, and Professor Emeritus Merton Bernstein of Washington University in St. Louis, as they analyzed the struggle for pro-worker health care in the US and the implications for labor. If you weren't able to be there, please follow the link on the LRC webpage to see both presentations (www.cpcs.umb.edu/lrc). We're already gearing up for our next seminar, which will be held in the spring about jobs policies—stay tuned for more details. In December and January, the LRC also offered an intensive course titled, "Are Unions Necessary?: Labor and Economic Transformation in the US Since 1945." LRC Director Susan Moir taught the course on two weekends, making it accessible to both undergraduate students and interested union members.

■ UMASS DARTMOUTH

Join us this spring as we present three important events: a legislative breakfast, Worker Memorial Day fundraising race, and a spring conference. The breakfast on April 10 is a way for workers to have direct access to our elected officials for questions, comments, and accountability. The race on May 2 is an annual fundraiser to keep our Center afloat. The spring conference on March 13 will bring together union activists to explore building stronger leaders for stronger unions and will provide an important opportunity to explore together larger issues of the labor movement, the economic crisis, and how to make change. Our union photography project continues with seventeen union members working directly with noted photographer Larry Fink. Class participants have been working to take 500 pictures each of workers, either portraits or while work is being performed. We will have a public showing of this work later in the year.

■ UMASS LOWELL

We have been developing new collaborations while continuing our education and training work. With longtime partner the Center for Women and Work at UMass Lowell and new partner Middlesex Community College, we collaborated with the Women's Bureau of the DOL to offer a wonderfully successful conference on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and its education and training opportunities for women, with over 150 women of all ages and from all walks of life attending. We also worked on the fifth annual North Shore CLC women's committee "Solidarity Breakfast", featuring success stories of the organizing of Budget Rent Car workers at Boston Logan Airport and a Charter School in Boston using the public sector majority authorization law. We also heard the heartbreak story of one of the Hyatt 100 housekeepers who were unjustly fired, who inspired all the participants with her courage and determination to win her rights.

The Resource Corner: TACKLING RIGHT WING IDEOLOGY

Below are resources for tackling right wing ideology specific to health care, as well as general values/ideology activities and approaches.

AFL-CIO website and blog: www.aflcio.org. See article by Mike Hall, Aug 25, 2009 at:
<http://blog.aflcio.org/2009/08/25/arguments-against-medicare-in-1960s-the-same-as-those-against-health-care-reform/>

The Change Agent Adult Education for Social Justice: News, Issues, and Ideas, Issue 22 on Values, March 2006. Designed for intermediate-level ESOL, ABE, GED, and adult diploma classes, it includes suggested activities. Available at:
<http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent/backissues.htm>. Free sign-in to download curriculum.

Families USA: "Responding to Attacks on Health Reform"
<http://www.familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/health-reform/responding-to-attacks.pdf>

Healthcare-NOW! an education and advocacy organization advocating for the passage of national, single-payer healthcare legislation has many resources on its website. Download Organizers Manual at:
<http://www.healthcare-now.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Organizers%20Manual.pdf>.
Most useful are: Sections 4: Analysis and "Think Tanks" and Framing and 5: Framing Worksheet

UMass Labor Extension: "Shrink, Shift, Shaft" is a workshop that exposes the far-right agenda: Shrink government, Shift who pays for it and who benefits, and Shaft working people. Extension has adapted what was originated by United for a Fair Economy and developed by SEIU's Education Department. Contact local labor extension coordinator if interested.

United for a Fair Economy: Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Life, Segment #10: "Values of CST and Values of the Economy". For this and other resources, go to Labor Extension Website at <http://www.cpcs.umb.edu/lep/index.html>

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UMass Amherst

Labor Extension Program

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418 N. Pleasant St.

Amherst, MA 01002-1735

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In the Past 4 months...

The UMass Labor Extension Program Has Provided Trainings On These Topics...

■ Building the Unit, Building the Union: Mobilizing the Members And Strategic Planning and Workplace Action

Massachusetts Nurses' Association

■ Women and Unions

Intro to Women's Studies Class

■ Leadership for Transforming Unions, and The Political Economy of Race

Massachusetts Labor Educators' Squaretable

■ Stewards Training

SEIU 888

Various unions

■ Stewards Training and History of Labor Laws

ATU

■ Teaching Rights at Work With a Focus on Temporary Workers

Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Educators (MCAE) Conference

To Contact the UMass Labor Extension Program:

■ UMASS AMHERST LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM

Labor Center, Gordon Hall

418 N. Pleasant St.

Amherst, MA 01002-1735

Dale Melcher: 413-545-6166

Fax: 413-545-0110

email: dmelcher@lrrc.umass.edu

■ UMASS DARTMOUTH LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM

Dubin Labor Education Center

285 Old Westport Road

North Dartmouth, MA 02747

Kim Wilson: 508-999-8781

Fax: 508-999-9168

email: kwilson@umassd.edu



■ UMASS BOSTON LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM

CPCS Labor Resource Center
100 Morrissey Blvd.

Boston, MA 02125-3393

Tess Ewing: 617-287-7352

email: tess.ewing@umb.edu

■ UMASS LOWELL LABOR EXTENSION PROGRAM

600 Suffolk St., 5th Floor
Lowell, MA 01854

Susan Winning: 978-934-3127

Fax: 978-934-4033

email: susan._winning@uml.edu

■ Introduction to Workers Rights

Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education

■ Your Rights as a Worker

E-Team

■ Leadership

SEIU Local 615 Higher Ed Division

■ Introducción a Liderazgo (Introduction to Leadership)

MassCOSH Immigrant Workers Center