By City Councilmember Nick Licata

THE TIME FOR REAL HEALTH CARE REFORM IS NOW

On Tuesday, February 17 the Seattle City Council affirmed their unanimous support for universal access to quality health care. In doing so, Seattle joined 24 other cities and counties and 18 states passing similar resolutions. I authored and sponsored this resolution upon the request of the Washington chapter of Physicians for a National Health Plan (PNHP).

Resolution 31111 urges the U.S. Congress to enact legislation to establish and implement this right by adopting HR 676, the U.S. National Health Insurance Act, proposed by Representative John Conyers or HR 1200, the American Health Security Act, proposed by Representative Jim McDermott. Both bills are the “single-payer” model, which would guarantee everyone access to all medically necessary care, including prescription drugs, with no co-pays or deductibles. Only the single-payer model contains costs by eliminating the administrative waste and bureaucracy associated with the private insurance industry, and it would assure patients their personal choice of doctor and hospital. The resolution also requests our Washington State Congressional delegation to support these bills.

Other city councils calling for the bill’s passage include those in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco and Louisville, Ky. The U.S. Conference of Mayors at its June meeting in Miami passed a similar resolution. Local government is closer to the people and their health care struggles than most elected officials. We see the real impacts of our communities and constituents suffering. Additionally, the costs to the City of Seattle of providing health-care benefits to its employees have risen while City revenue has not kept pace. Here are some sobering facts:

An estimated 160,000, 15.6% of King County residents less than 65 years of age, do not have health insurance.

The number of uninsured children in Washington State has reached the highest level in more than a decade; 3% of children in King County are uninsured.

Seattle's community health clinics provide treatment for individuals regardless of their ability to pay and approximately 60% of their new patients are uninsured costing King County $139,821,202 in 2006.
A recent letter from PNHP to the previous Secretary-designate Tom Daschle, Health and Human Services says: Candidly, we are alarmed by some comments by members of the Senate and by the Obama transition team that suggest that the single-payer option is being excluded from consideration - is ‘off the table’ - in the health reform debate…other proposals “share the fatal flaw of preserving a central role for the investor-owned health insurance industry in a private-public financing mix. This approach simply won’t work, as numerous state-based experiments patterned after this model have shown. These plans always fail because they are unable to control costs.”

The resolution can be linked here:

Urban Politics (UP) blends my insights and information on current public policy developments and personal experiences with the intent of helping citizens shape Seattle's future.

URBAN POLITICS SUBSCRIPTION INSTRUCTIONS

To subscribe, send a message to: urbanpolitics-subscribe@speakeasy.net