



## Labor's Principles for Health Care Reform

**Together, with our unions and our allies, we will work to:**

1. ***Guarantee affordable quality health care for all Californians.*** Nearly seven million Californians lack health care coverage at some point during the year. As costs increase and more workers are being hired as independent contractors, temps, part-timers, and seasonal employees, employment based health care is eroding. Retirees are struggling to maintain coverage and many cannot afford needed medication. We oppose the reduction of retiree benefits. We will resist this race to the bottom by working to create a health care system that covers all Californians.
2. ***Contain health care costs.*** Health care costs have skyrocketed over the last few years. Pharmaceutical and insurance companies are two of the most profitable industries in the world and together they are diverting more and more of our health care spending away from services and toward administration, advertising and profits. We need greater transparency and oversight to better contain health care costs. We call for increased efficiency and an end to duplication with the workers' compensation system. Rather than maintain two health care systems – one if we are injured at work and one if we are injured at home – we should integrate workers' compensation medical treatment with employer-provided health care.
3. ***Employers and government must join workers in sharing responsibility and risk.*** Everyone – employers, the government, and individuals – must share the responsibility of health care for Californians. Working families already pay for a share of our own health care through sacrificed wage increases, a share of premiums, co-pays or deductibles. We should not have to shoulder the burden of increased costs and diminished care. The best way to improve health care is to pool risk by purchasing insurance collectively. Group purchasing of health insurance, prescription drugs, and hospital services can help keep health care costs down. Placing all the risk and responsibility on individuals will only shift costs onto the backs of families.
4. ***Ensure patient choice and protect the doctor-patient relationship.*** Medical decisions should be made by patients and their health care providers, free of interference from HMOs and insurance company bureaucrats. We will continue to fight to ensure that all Californians have the freedom to choose - and keep - their own doctor and have access to the care they need.
5. ***Improve the quality of care.*** Quality care means that an individual receives the right care, at the right time, resulting in the best possible health outcomes. Preventative care is essential to promoting good health and reducing costs to the system. Access to public safety net services must be maintained. In addition, we must ensure that all health care provides for a basic level of medically appropriate coverage.

# Sample Letter to Union Members

PRINT ON YOUR LETTERHEAD

DATE

Dear [YOUR UNION MEMBER'S NAME],

We know our health care is in trouble. Rising medical costs, high prices for prescriptions, and insurance co-pays means that we are paying out more money than ever before when we need medical attention. And as union members, we've had to give up wage increases and other benefits at the bargaining table so that we can keep our health care.

But this year is special because we have a unique opportunity to pass a good law that will protect our health care and keeps costs down. The union is working with the California Labor Federation and other allies across the state. Together, we will lobby legislators, turn out for rallies and work with our employers to protect our health care.

There are two things that we would like you to do to help protect your health care this year. First, tell us your story about health care. Every one has a health care horror story and we want your legislator to hear yours (or a family member's). Go to [www.calaborfed.org](http://www.calaborfed.org) to tell your story, or call (510) 663-4054.

Second, we want you to contact your legislator. Help send a strong message to Sacramento, and to the nation, that we want a law to provide affordable health care. Go to [www.calaborfed.org](http://www.calaborfed.org) to send a letter to your legislator, and to learn more about the work that other unions are doing to protect health care.

Together, we can make good health care a reality for all.

Sincerely yours,

[YOUR NAME]

# Sample Newsletter Article

## Health Care's Broken, We Can Fix It

We are fighting to protect our health care at the bargaining table. But this fight is bigger than that. We also have to fix a broken system.

Why is it broken? Insurance and pharmaceutical companies (two of the most profitable industries in the world) drive up costs and keep more of our money for profits, while spending less on actual health care.

Another reason is that more and more Californians are losing health insurance from their employers. The costs of the uninsured are passed on to all of us. In fact, between 15 – 20% of the premiums paid for your insurance cover people you have never met! When the uninsured get sick, they are often forced to wait until they need treatment in an emergency room. They can't afford to pay, but the hospitals find a way to charge us for that care.

That's right – our insurance pays. And it's expensive!

But nearly 80% of the uninsured are members of working families. That's why we need more employers to provide insurance for their workers. It saves us money and levels the playing field for non-union businesses that have been draining our insurance!

The union is working to fix the system by passing new legislation in Sacramento. And there are others proposing legislation...some good and some bad.

Governor Schwarzenegger's proposal for health care reform puts more burden onto individuals, rather than asking employers to pay their fair share. His plan would legally require all individuals to have health insurance coverage – just like auto insurance – but with no guarantee that it would be affordable.

Simply requiring individuals to purchase insurance won't solve the problem of the uninsured. In reality, most people are uninsured because they cannot afford coverage.

By shifting more burden onto individuals, the Governor's plan lets these employers off the hook and gives them an incentive to drop coverage all together. *Union members could lose the coverage we currently have and be forced to buy coverage on the open market.*

So how can you help? Send a message to your legislator asking them to support real health care reform. It only takes a second to send the message, and you can add your own comments if you like. Go to [www.calaborfed.org](http://www.calaborfed.org) today to take action!

## FOR PRIVATE SECTOR

“My three children and I have gone without health care because my employer has a 2 ½ year waiting period for family coverage.”  
--Inez Martinez, UFCW member



# Is Health Care Picking Your Pocket?

Our union has been fighting to protect our health care at the bargaining table. But costs are rising so fast that fewer employers want to cover their share. And our families are paying the price.

**We need a law that will protect our health care.**

**Help win real health care reform in California this year.**

- ✓ **Tell us your health care story. Go to [www.calaborfed.org](http://www.calaborfed.org) or call (510) 663-4054.**
- ✓ **Send a message to your legislator and tell them we want real health care reform! Go to [www.calaborfed.org](http://www.calaborfed.org) to send a message and learn more.**

FOR PUBLIC SECTOR

# Let's Stop Trading For Health Care!

Our union has negotiated good contracts that protect our health care. But costs are rising so fast that we've had to give up some wage increases and benefits in order to keep our health care plans.

**We need a law that will protect our health care so we don't have to choose.**

**Help win real health care reform in California this year.**

- ✓ **Tell us your health care story. Go to [www.calaborfed.org](http://www.calaborfed.org) or call (510) 663-4054.**
- ✓ **Send a message to your legislator and tell them we want real health care reform! Go to [www.calaborfed.org](http://www.calaborfed.org) to send a message and learn more.**

FOR BUILDING TRADES

# Health Care—Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?

Our union has negotiated good contracts that protect our health care. But that's getting harder to do. Costs are rising so fast that our health care benefits may be at risk in the future. And contributions to our pension funds are at risk, too.

**Bargaining alone won't cut it. We need a law that will protect our health care.**

**Help win real health care reform in California this year.**

- ✓ **Tell us your health care story. Go to [www.calaborfed.org](http://www.calaborfed.org) or call (510) 663-4054.**
- ✓ **Send a message to your legislator and tell them we want real health care reform! Go to [www.calaborfed.org](http://www.calaborfed.org) to send a message and learn more.**

# Sample Letter to Employers

[DATE]

Dear [EMPLOYER NAME]:

It is more important than ever for us to work together for health care reform that provides quality care at the fairest cost. Both the employer and employee stand to gain from reform.

We have an unprecedented window of opportunity to enact policies to control health care costs, expand access to coverage, and improve the quality of our health care.

Both labor and management have suffered under double-digit inflation of health care costs. We both continue to pay more and get less.

We cannot solve the health care crisis at the bargaining table. We believe a cooperative employer and union approach will lead us to reform that benefits both of us. If we don't lead the way together, the hope for reform is dim.

Labor has adopted the attached five Guiding Principles for Health Care Reform. We believe that these principles can be universally embraced by both employers and employees.

We ask your consideration of the attached principles for health care reform and ask you to join with us in the call for reform. We will follow up with you to begin this important challenge.

Sincerely,

[UNION LEADER NAME]

# Employer's Shared Principles for Health Care Reform

**We will work with the union to:**

6. **Guarantee affordable quality health care for all Californians.** Nearly seven million Californians lack health care coverage at some point during the year. As costs increase, employers are finding it harder to provide coverage for their employees. Through our premium costs, we subsidize the care used by the uninsured when they cannot afford it. Retirees are struggling to maintain coverage and many cannot afford needed medication. We will work to create a health care system that covers all Californians.
7. **Contain health care costs.** Health care costs have skyrocketed over the last few years. Pharmaceutical and insurance companies are two of the most profitable industries in the world and together they are diverting more and more of our health care spending away from services and toward administration and advertising. By implementing measures such as electronic record keeping we can reduce cost and improve quality of care. Negotiating lower pharmaceutical prices and insurance premium rates; as well as greater transparency and oversight, will also help to contain health care costs.
8. **Share risk and responsibility.** Everyone – employers, the government, and individuals – must share the responsibility of health care. The best way to improve health care is to pool risk by purchasing insurance collectively. Group purchasing of health insurance, prescription drugs, and hospital services can help keep health care costs down. Placing all the risk and responsibility on individuals will not solve the problem.
9. **Ensure patient choice and protect the doctor-patient relationship.** Medical decisions should be made by patients and their health care providers, free of interference from HMOs and insurance companies. We will continue to work to ensure that all Californians have the freedom to choose - and keep - their own doctor and have access to the care they need.
10. **Improve the quality of care.** Quality care means that an individual receives the right care, at the right time, resulting in the best possible health outcomes. Preventative care is essential to promoting good health and reducing costs to the system. Access to public safety net services must be maintained. In addition, we should ensure that all health care provides for a basic level of medically appropriate coverage.

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I agree to these shared principles for health care reform.

Employer Name

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Employer Signature

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# **Save OUR Health Care**

## **Resolution for the Local Union Executive Board**

WHEREAS our union is fighting to protect our health care at the bargaining table, but we also know that we need new legislation to really protect our members' health care over the long term; and

WHEREAS health care costs have risen dramatically, and 15 to 20 percent of the cost of premiums for our members go to pay for the uninsured; and

WHEREAS more and more employers are trying to reduce costs by putting more of the burden of health care directly on workers' shoulders; and

WHEREAS the only way to lower costs and protect our health care is to reform the current system; and

WHEREAS more than eighty percent of Californians who are uninsured are employed, and more than half are employed full-time; and

WHEREAS in order to create an affordable, quality health care system it is important that employers and government share responsibility and risk with consumers; and

WHEREAS labor leaders and allies across California have worked together to develop a set of principles that outline the needs of working families in reforming the health care system; and

WHEREAS the California Labor Federation is building a coalition consisting of unions and allies called "It's Our Healthcare", which is dedicated to promoting these principles for real health care reform in the state of California; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Board of \_\_\_\_\_ supports Labor's principles developed by the Executive Council of the California Labor Federation and will actively support those goals as a means to achieving affordable, quality health care for all working Californians; and

FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Board of \_\_\_\_\_ joins the California Labor Federation and other members of the "It's Our Healthcare" coalition. We will mobilize our members through online activism and field mobilization to call on elected representatives in every branch of local, county, state and national government to support our principles so that quality health care in California is affordable and accessible to all.

# Talking Points for Health Care Campaign Powerpoint

**\*\*Use these talking points with the accompanying CD\*\***

## Slide #1/ Title Slide

- 2007 has been called the “Year of Health Care Reform”
- We have an opportunity to influence the state of health care this year like no other before

## Slide #2: We Know It's A Crisis

- We've seen headlines in local and national media saying that our health care is in crisis
- Elected officials have finally realized that our current system isn't working
- But we've known for a long time that this is a crisis—we've dealt with this at the bargaining table for years
- The union **[insert name here]** has been working hard to protect your health care but we're losing the war
- This is our chance-- the public is clamoring for change and elected officials are saying they're ready to bring us reform
- We need to pass a good law to protect health care

## Slide #3: Did You Know?

- Here are some facts about this crisis...
- 6.5 million people are uninsured in the state
- But over 80% of the uninsured are in working families
- People without health insurance could just as easily be you and me
- A few facts about union members across the state... part-time school employees have no health insurance
- And 50% of union grocery workers in Southern California have no health insurance
- Unions offer the best chance that you will have coverage, but are no longer a guarantee

## Slide #4: Did You Know?

- Family plans can cost thousands every year in health care premiums—up to \$15,000 a year
- Even if you're not directly paying this, family plans cost a lot of money

## Slide #5: Employers Feel It Too

- One of the reasons why we are feeling more of the squeeze on health care costs is because our employers are scaling back on the amount of coverage they offer you and your families **[IF THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO YOUR MEMBERS, skip this bullet and continue below]**
- Many employer sponsored plans have disappeared or don't cover all employees
- The truth is that employers are feeling the pressure of rising costs, too
- Costs for employer provided health insurance premiums have risen more than 500% in 15 years.
- The most dramatic increase has been seen from 2000 to 2006, the years that the Bush Administration has been in office

## **Slide #6: Costs Passed to You**

- And when employers feel the squeeze financially, they try to pass it down to workers
- As union members, we feel this perhaps more than any one else because we come into direct contact with these changes at the bargaining table

## **Slide #7: Bargaining Trade-Offs**

- It's getting harder for us to get our employers to cover health care costs, and we find ourselves more and more often trading off wage increases, retirement benefits, and other benefits so that we can afford to keep our health care
- We know what we've been giving up, and it hurts

## **Slide #8: Who Profits?**

- There are a few players who are not suffering from rising health care costs, they are doing great!
- Insurance companies may complain loudly to government, and they are keeping a low profile now, but they are making record profits.
- Insurance companies made over \$9 billion in 2006—in profits
- And drug companies are doing very well, too—they made more than \$39 billion in profits last year. That's more than the GDP of some developing countries!
- While health care premiums went up 9.2% last year, wages only increased 3%. There's no way for us to keep up.
- And it's really showing that Californians can't stay on top of this crisis—49% of bankruptcies last year were directly attributable to out of control medical bills.
- That means mortgaged homes, college and retirement accounts emptied out, so that we can afford to see a doctor when we get sick.

## **Slide #9: Polling Facts**

- Our California Labor Federation conducted opinion polling of union members throughout California. These polls showed how strongly workers feel about saving our health care.

- Three-fourths of union members believe health care needs major reform or a complete overhaul. We're fed up!

### **Slide #10: Polling Facts**

- A majority of union members believe that individuals should not bear the financial burden of health care alone

### **Slide #11: Polling Facts**

- Union members reported that they support improving the quality of health care and believe that insurance and drug company profits should be controlled

### **Slide #12: How Do We Make it Work?**

- Obviously, not all of the current proposals for new laws will be good for working people
- But we know we need a good law to protect health care for us
- We know that real health care reform will be an uphill battle, and that we will have to work hard this year to make sure the right kind of legislation is passed

### **Slide #13: Reform Proposals in Review**

- There are several bad ideas in current bills that we know will hurt union members
- Individual mandate means that every Californian is required to have health care coverage, regardless if they can afford to. It says you're on your own to get health insurance, and most people can't afford that.
- Other bad elements include reduced employer responsibility
- Shifting risk and cost onto the individual, so that it is not shared by employers and/or the government
- And, cuts to public health care, which currently serve as a safety net for the under-insured as well as the uninsured

### **Slide #14: This Is Labor's Proposal**

- Unions have come together to agree on five important principles of health care reform
- First, we want to guarantee affordable health care for all Californians
- Second, we want to contain health care costs
- Third, we want to ensure patient choice of doctor
- Fourth, we want to improve quality of care
- Fifth, we want to ensure that the responsibility and risk of health care is shared by employers, government and workers. We believe that this principle offers us the most realistic chance of enacting real health care reform this year.

## **Slide #15: “It’s Our Healthcare!” Coalition**

- Working people and our allies are the ones who are in the best position to effect real change this year
- Truth is, we need all the help we can get

## **Slide #16: It’s Our Healthcare!**

- Many organizations, labor, community groups, religious groups, and other allies have joined together so that we can all implement the kind of health care reform that is needed in the state
- Together, we have committed to mobilize members, lobby legislators, and talk to the press so that our voices are heard

## **Slide #17: How You Fit In**

- There are many roles we can play in enacting health care reform this year

## **Slide #18: What We Can Do**

- By participating in local actions with the union and with other groups, you can make health care reform a reality this year for all of us.

## It's Our Health Care- So Tell Your Health Care Story!

The union is fighting for a law to protect your health care, and we need your health care story to tell legislators in Sacramento why we need real reform now.

Your story might be about you or a family member, and about any problem that you have had with your health care coverage including prescription costs, unexpected bills, or rising premiums.

### **Please tell us about yourself.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Local union: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Write your story here. Please print clearly. You can use the back of this page if you need more space. Please fax the completed form to (510) 663-4099, or call in your story to (510) 663-4054.**