



LEADERSHIP UPDATE



Sign up to put the Employee Free Choice Act on your meeting agenda.



Working Families Toolkit®



Employee Free Choice Act Website



Health Care Website



AFL-CIO Now Blog



Online Tools for e-Activist & Local Websites

Dear Patricia,

Happy New Year! This is the first Turn Around America campaign update of 2009—compiling updates, plans and strategies.

We hope you enjoyed welcoming in a new year and are rested and ready to focus on the work ahead. A dire economy, a broken health care system and trampled workers' rights are in need of our attention and efforts. We have real hope for the change working families need with the swearing in of our new president in just one week.

Employee Free Choice Act

Our Turn Around America field campaign for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act is well under way. Last week, the AFL-CIO state directors and key staff met in Washington, D.C., to lay out our message, plans and strategy to help guide the campaign. The state directors will be returning home with fresh ideas and focus to help jump-start the campaign in the states. Also this month, President John Sweeney has asked all central labor councils to feature the Turn Around America campaign/Employee Free Choice Act at their monthly meetings. Some 152 central labor councils have already signed up. If your labor council hasn't yet, you can [sign up on the Working Families Toolkit®](#) site to feature this discussion at your meeting. If you already have had your meeting, we would like to hear about it. The report-back form is available on the [Working Families Toolkit®](#) site as well.

This week, we also [released a new survey](#) (PDF) that shows 78 percent of those polled want to see legislation that protects workers' freedom to form unions and bargain for a better life—great news and a strong signal to Congress and President-elect Barack Obama that [we need to pass the Employee Free Choice Act](#).

Health Care Reform

Health care reform is HOT, HOT, HOT and is both promising and promises to be a battle royal.

News from the AFL-CIO Now blog

- [Hilda Solis, the nominee for labor secretary, answers questions](#) from senators at her confirmation hearing.
- Obama, Congress put [Working Families at the heart of the Economic Recovery Plan](#).

There was a lot of behind-the-scenes work on health care over the past few weeks, including union meetings with the Obama transition team. And last Thursday, confirmation hearings were held for former Sen. Tom Daschle for secretary of health and human services--signaling that health care reform is still near the top of the transition team and Congress's agenda.

The incoming administration is looking at moving several health items quite soon, e.g., reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which we are hearing may be on the House floor this week, repeal of the Bush regulations restricting state options on enrolling more people and other items.

Major health care issues are under strong consideration for the Obama economic recovery package. This could include increasing federal payments on Medicaid (very important for state budgets), health care for the unemployed, information technology investments and workforce issues.

Republicans and conservative Democrats are raising objections to most of the health care pieces under consideration for the recovery package. And they are insisting on including something about "entitlement reform." What chutzpah to be suggesting benefit cuts in Medicare and Social Security in the context of an economic recovery package.

For the unemployed, we also are hearing of the possibility of progress toward providing increased access to health insurance, possibly including **opening up enrollment in Medicaid**, either on an emergency basis or permanently. There is some precedent for this. After Sept. 11, 2001, New York instituted a facilitated enrollment for Disaster Relief Medicaid. Using Medicaid to increase access is quite controversial in the broad health care movement.

The "**public plan option**" that is part of the Obama plan and also part of the Max Baucus white paper is shaping up to be a major battlefield. We are [posting a recent paper by professor Jacob Hacker](#), making the case for the need for a public plan choice in health care reform. Hacker's point: ***A public plan is essential to accomplish these three vital goals for improving our health care system:***

1. ***Contain costs.***
2. ***Improve quality.***
3. ***Drive value.***

We agree.

Don't forget about **insurance company abuses**. The public plan

option debate has taken the focus away from insurance company abuses. We can't let that happen. Last month, we [posted some material on the initial proposals from the insurance industry](#). Expect more in the weeks ahead.

Together, we can Turn Around America.

This message was sent to afciop@bellsouth.net. Visit your [subscription management page](#) to modify your email communication preferences or update your personal profile. To stop ALL email from Turn Around America, AFL-CIO, click to [remove](#) yourself from our lists (or reply via email with "remove or unsubscribe" in the subject line).

**Working Families
e-Activist Network**