

RESOLUTION NO. 9

HEALTH CARE

Once again, health care for all Americans is a major issue.

Despite the constant rhetoric that something will be done, the only undisputed fact about this crisis is even more people have fallen from the ranks of those who are covered by some type of health insurance. As we meet, almost 46 million Americans – many of them children – have no type of medical coverage whatsoever.

News stories from around the country continue to report about companies demanding benefits cutbacks from union members. It does not matter that these workers and their predecessors sacrificed other things they may have wanted during contract talks to gain health care for themselves and their families. Instead, corporate public relations hacks point the blame at their so-called greedy employees who have more than “average” workers and don’t deserve such. These publicity professionals claim the CEO and board members – who vote ever-increasing bonuses to themselves after each worker rollback – are doing all they can to keep the company afloat while withdrawing more and more from workers who have less and less to give.

Meanwhile, seniors discovered last month that the promises of a great new prescription drug plan through Medicare have fallen short. Life-sustaining medicine refills were denied as the much-ballyhooed system collapsed. State governments – already under stress from unfunded federal mandates – had to step in and pay for prescriptions while the bureaucrats at the federal level tried to figure out what they were doing.

These are just two of the many problems that have been exposed about America’s health care system. Yet, several signs of hope are emerging.

Last year, the Maryland legislature overwhelmingly approved a measure that called for any business employing more than 10,000 within the state to either provide some health care or pay into the state Medicaid fund. Four companies fell into that category. Three are Maryland institutions and already met the state requirements: Johns Hopkins, Northrop Grumman and Giant Supermarkets. The fourth – Wal-Mart – convinced the state’s governor to veto the measure rather than meet a basic obligation. Last month, the legislature overrode the governor’s veto to pass this first-of-a-kind bill.

Other states have introduced similar legislation that would make Wal-Mart, the nation’s largest employer, pay its fair share. Studies conducted around the country have shown Wal-Mart demanding tax breaks to build in communities while dumping employees and their families on the state health care rolls. In fact, 46 percent of the children of Wal-Mart workers nationwide either are uninsured or on Medicaid, according to the store’s own information.

The AFL-CIO is working with its affiliates, state federations, central labor councils and other health care allies to launch the "Fair Share Health Care" campaign. The effort is designed to stop companies from shifting the cost of health insurance onto the backs of workers, taxpayers and conscientious businesses. More than 30 states are considering such proposals.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the ITPEU-OPEIU Local 4873, AFL-CIO, continue their long-standing fight to improve the lives of their members and families by working to improve the quality of health care in the United States.