$40 Million Health Care Campaign to Launch in Illinois and Nationwide

Community Leaders in Springfield Join Together to Push for Quality, Affordable Health Care for Every American

Springfield, IL - July 8, 2008 – Today, here in Springfield and in 52 other cities across the country, including 37 state capitols, a new national campaign is bringing together millions of Americans to demand quality, affordable health care for all. Health Care for America Now (HCAN) is being launched by 95 national and local groups that represent labor, community organizations, doctors, nurses, women, small businesses, faith-based organizations, people of color, netroots activists, and think tanks. Health Care for America Now is organizing to assure that the first order of business of the next President and Congress is to pass legislation in 2009 that guarantees quality, affordable health care for all.

Health Care for America Now is an unprecedented coalition led by ACORN, AFSCME, Americans United for Change, Campaign for America's Future, Center for American Progress Action Fund, Center for Community Change, MoveOn, National Education Association, National Women's Law Center, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, SEIU, United Food and Commercial Workers, and USAction.

“In 2009, we will either have a guarantee of quality, affordable health care we all can count on or we will continue to be at the mercy of the private health insurance industry that is charging us more, giving us less and putting company profits before our health,” said William McNary, President of USAction and Co-Director of Citizen Action/Illinois. “Here in Springfield, and in communities all across the country, we’re asking one question, ‘Which side are you on?’ Are you on the side of quality, affordable health care? Or are you on the side of being left alone to fend for yourself in a complicated, bureaucratic insurance market?”

Starting today, the campaign is spending an initial $1.5 million on national television, print, and online advertising and is sending out an email blast to more than 5 million people. Over the next five months, Health Care for America Now plans to spend $25 million in paid media and have 100 organizers in 45 states.

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"People in this state and country work hard to provide for themselves and their families, but the American people have been backed into a corner by the insurance industry," said Michael T. Carrigan, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO. "We can no longer allow the crippled healthcare system in this country to continue. Working families in Illinois must stand up to the insurance industry and advocate for quality, affordable healthcare for all citizens."

Health Care for America Now offers a bold new vision for health care reform: Americans can keep the private insurance they have, join a new private insurance plan, or choose a public health insurance plan. The campaign also calls for a government role in setting and enforcing rules on the insurance industry which consistently charges whatever it wants, sets high deductibles, denies coverage based on pre-existing conditions, and drops coverage when people get sick.

“For more than a decade, my bottom line has been under siege by rising health care costs,” says David Borris, owner of a Hel’s Kitchen Catering in Highland Park. “As it is, I can only afford health care for 14 of my 25 employees, excluding their spouse or families. We cannot trust the insurance industry that puts profits before people to get us out of this mess. Our health care system is not working, and government cannot expect small businesses to shoulder this burden alone”.

“We can’t be misled by health care proposals that leave women at an inherent disadvantage in the bureaucratic health insurance market”, says Pam Sutherland, Director of Illinois Planned Parenthood Council. “Tax credits proposals that cover only a fraction of our health insurance costs will cover even less of the regular health care women require. Women in Illinois and across America need the choice of a public plan to reduce the chance they will forego medical care or rack up high medical debt.”

Carrigan, Sutherland and Borris stood with Joanna Gauvin, Legislative Director for AFSCME Council 31, as well as representatives of SEIU and the Illinois Education Association, in calling for quality, affordable health care for all.

Health Care for America Now started with a financial commitment of at least $500,000 from each of the 13 steering committee members and a $10 million grant from NY-based Atlantic Philanthropies.

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Health Care for America Now ("HCAN"), a section 501(c)(4) issue advocacy organization, is a broad coalition of nonprofit and political organizations that are working to promote quality, affordable health care for all Americans. HCAN and each of its members conducts and funds only activities appropriate to its tax and election law status.