2012 Annual Report

2012 Issue Campaigns

Fully Implementing the Affordable Care Act

In 2012, CA/IL continued to partner with a diverse coalition of health care advocates to push for full implementation of President Obama’s Affordable Care Act (ACA). A key component of the ACA is the expansion of federal Medicaid benefits to low-income individuals who currently fall into the “coverage gap.” In order to achieve real cost savings in health care spending and help bring our nation closer to universal coverage, the ACA needed to address the issue of helping the working poor obtain coverage without creating a new financial burden on those who could not afford it.

This is one of the key elements currently being debated in Springfield. Representative Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) has led the charge with HB 6253, a bill that would extend Medicaid benefits to childless and non-disabled low-income individuals who are not currently covered by Medicaid. Action is expected on this bill during 2013.

Health Benefits Exchange

CA/IL continued to work in coalition with partner organizations to create and implement a health benefits exchange. The exchange is the centerpiece of the ACA, acting as a marketplace for individuals (including Medicaid recipients) and small businesses to buy insurance.

States are taking a number of paths toward health care reform: either implementing exchanges on their own, in partnership with the Federal government, or under complete federal control. Like most states, Illinois will work in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services to create an exchange which will become independent within two years. CA/IL and its partners are currently lobbying the state legislature to pass enacting legislation in the Spring 2013 Legislative Session.

Cook County Medical Waiver

In 2012, CA/IL supported successful efforts to get state and federal approval for the implementation of the Medicaid expansion portion of the ACA. Under this provision, people who make under 133% of the federal poverty level will be able to apply for Medicaid for their health insurance. The 1115 Waiver allowed Cook County to implement the Medicaid expansion program 15 months early.

Cook County currently spends around $500 million per year on uncompensated care to cover uninsured people who use the county hospital system. With this waiver, the county will be able to address this deficit and help low and moderate income families access better care. Approval allows the hospital system to “early enroll” over 115,000 individuals who will be eligible for Medicaid in 2014 into a Cook County Medicaid network, at no cost to the state of Illinois.

Diesel Pollution

CA/IL continues to lead the Illinois Campaign to Clean up Diesel Pollution in partnership with Respiratory Health Association (RHA) and the Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC). And again in 2012, the coalition won many significant victories. In December, members spoke with representatives from the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) about their diesel bus fleet. With the aid of federal funds, every CTA diesel bus will be equipped with a diesel particulate filter (DPF) by 2016 at the very latest. When the plan is executed, the agency expects to see a 55% reduction in particulate matter (PM).

CA/IL met with Pace Suburban Bus Service to discuss the makeup of its fleet. Pace expects the entire fleet to run clean by 2015; buses will be equipped with DPFs or converted to compressed natural gas (CNG) with the help of federal funds.

CA/IL led an effort to push Midwestern hospitals and universities to adopt clean-construction policies. Said provisions would require cleaner equipment and anti-idling measures at construction sites in order to limit PM pollution. Over six months, CA/IL communicated with approximately 600 hospitals and 200 universities in nine states.

Social Security and Medicare

CA/IL and the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans (IARA) had another successful year of organizing to protect retirement security for all generations. To celebrate Medicare and Social Security’s anniversaries, IARA’s Senior Truth Tour made stops in Moline and Rockford to highlight U.S. Rep. Bobby Schilling’s votes to turn Medicare into a voucher program and privatize Social Security. Throughout the year, IARA held 17 “Setting the Record Straight” educational workshops that debunked the myths surrounding Social Security.

Ways to Connect

with Citizen Action/Illinois:

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on twitter

Visit our website: www.citizenaction-il.org

CA/IL Co-director Lynda DeLaforgue speaks alongside Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth and Planned Parenthood of Illinois Vice President of Public Policy Pam Sutherland on the importance of protecting women’s health care rights.
Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the ACA. In May, IARA brought nearly 400 seniors to the state capital to call on legislators not to cut Illinois Cares Rx and Medicaid services. CA/IL will continue to partner with IARA to protect security for current and future retirees.

State and Federal Budget
CA/IL worked to oppose deep cuts to Medicaid and senior citizen prescription drug programs in Illinois. Unfortunately, we were unable to stop the elimination of programs such as Illinois Cares RX. We will continue to work in 2013 to restore some of the cuts to low-income seniors and disabled people that can access to affordable prescriptions. In addition, CA/IL worked in partnership with The Action to prevent the devastating effects of the “fiscal cliff” by advocating for an end to the Bush tax cuts for the top 2% of wage earners.

Civic Engagement
In February, CA/IL’s state political committee, the Progressive Action Project, made endorsements for the 2012 Primary Election. General Election endorsements were made in September. In order to receive our endorsement, a candidate must win 60% of the votes cast by the Committee. Congressional candidates appeared before our Policy Council members at both meetings to discuss their candidacies and allow our key organizational decision-makers the opportunity to ask questions about where they stand on issues. More than 80% of our endorsed candidates won their race for public office.

Starting in September, CA/IL, in partnership with the Peoria NAACP, launched a campaign to register underrepresented voters in the Peoria area. Our efforts added an additional 2,400 new voters to the rolls in time for the 2012 General Election.

In addition to our voter registration project, CA/IL mobilized infrequent voters in Peoria, Decatur, Springfield, Aurora, and Joliet. We developed a non-partisan message and materials after conducting focus groups in target cities. Our canvassers knocked on the doors of over 4,000 households the Saturday before Election Day and again on Election Day. We also made two rounds of get-out-the-vote (GOTV) calls to African-American households in the 8th, 10th, 11th, 13th, and 17th Congressional Districts. In all, over 7,000 calls were made urging these voters to make their voices heard.

Fair Utility Rates
CA/IL worked with Attorney General Lisa Madigan to pass a law that outlaws "cramming," a practice in which third-party companies place unwanted and unauthorized charges on customers’ telephone bills. The charges usually go unnoticed by consumers, who are typically billed anywhere from $5 to $45 for services ranging from calling cards to voice mail and extended warranties they never requested. An estimated 20 million households across America each year are impacted by cramming. The new law only applies to customers who have land-line phones. The law goes into effect January 1, 2013.

Consumer Rights
CA/IL worked with Attorney General Madigan to pass the Debtors' Rights Act of 2012, a measure that protects poor people from being jailed over unpaid debts. The law prevents creditors from abusing the court system to place someone in jail to collect on a debt he or she is clearly unable to pay. The law also bans abusive and burdensome “pay or appear” orders that have been routinely entered against debtors in some Illinois counties. These orders, which usually remained in effect for three years, required debtors to make monthly payments or court appearances, even if their financial circumstances had not improved. Missing a single payment or hearing often resulted in a debtor being sent to jail. People who fell victim to these practices typically owed medical bills, credit card debts, or payday loans.