2008 Issue Campaigns

Fighting for Health Care for America Now!
Citizen Action/Illinois (CA/IL) is a member of Health Care for America Now (HCAN), an unprecedented coalition of more than 1,300 businesses and 465 national and state organizations - united in the effort to win a guarantee of quality, affordable health care for all. Our principles are clear: Americans must have the option of choosing a private or public plan, pre-existing conditions and other exclusions must be eliminated, and government must play a role in controlling costs and ensuring quality coverage for everyone.

HCAN has signed on 154 members of the 111th Congress to the HCAN statement of principles. In Illinois, nine members of the Congressional delegation have signed on, including: President-Elect Obama, Senator Durbin, and Representatives Gutierrez, Jackson, Emanuel, Davis, Schakowsky, Halvorson, and Hare. We are currently contacting the remaining members of the Illinois Congressional delegation to garner their support of the HCAN principles.

On October 6, President-Elect Obama stated, "Ensuring Americans in Illinois and across the country have access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare coverage is one of my top priorities. I am proud to join HCAN's efforts to tackle the tough challenges we face in reforming our nation's healthcare system."

Fixing Medicare Part D
CA/IL continued to lead the Medicare Education and Advocacy Campaign in partnership with the Illinois Alliance of Retired Americans. This fall, the campaign organized six community meetings across the state in the effort to educate seniors and service providers on how to shop around for the best Medicare Part D plan and to advocate for legislation to make Part D more affordable. CA/IL distributed thousands of copies of A Quick Guide for Cautious Consumers. Visit our website, www.citizenaction-il.org to obtain a copy of the guide.

Creating a Healthy Environment
CA/IL continued to partner with the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago to lead the Illinois Campaign to Clean up Diesel Pollution, a coalition comprised of over 60 public health, community, labor and environmental organizations. The goal of the campaign is to pass municipal ordinances and a Cook County ordinance, mandating the utilization of cleaner fuels and the installation of diesel particulate filters on construction equipment used in publicly awarded contracts costing over two million dollars. The Campaign is also working with the Chicago Transit Authority to apply for funding to retrofit its entire diesel bus fleet.

Saving Cook County Health Services
CA/IL helped to establish The Emergency Network to Save Cook County Health Services in July 2007 to press for the establishment of a trusteeship to assume control of the county’s healthcare system and to call for a restoration of the system’s funding. The Emergency Network achieved both goals on February 29 with the passage of a responsible budget, which averted further cuts to a healthcare system hard hit by reductions in 2007, and the establishment of an independent governing body. The Emergency Network continues to advocate for a strategic reconstruction of the county’s healthcare system, which adequately addresses community health needs as efficiently and compassionately as possible.

Engaging People in Our Democracy
CA/IL registered over 20,700 voters in seven Illinois counties during the 2008 General Election cycle. By partnering with local organizations, CA/IL helped to increase civic engagement among youth, communities of color, and low-income populations.

Keeping You Informed
Please visit our website to view the 2008 Public Interest Scorecard, which examines the voting records of elected officials in the Illinois General Assembly. The scored legislation is representative of various issues, including gun control, insurance mandates, consumer protections, and the environment.

Electing Progressive Leaders
CA/IL was pleased to announce the success of many of our endorsed candidates in the November 2008 General Election. Notable victories were won by State Representative-Elect Jehan Gordon (Peoria), U.S. Representative-Elect Debbie Halvorson (11th District), U.S. Representative Bill Foster (14th District), and U.S. President-Elect Barack Obama. Congratulations!
Illinois Cares Rx Expansion and Improvement, HB 4449
CA/IL continues to lead the fight for improved access to pharmaceutical drugs for low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities. HB 4449 would raise the income threshold and allow all Medicare beneficiaries, eligible for Illinois Care Rx Basic, to receive Illinois Cares Rx Plus – providing more seniors and individuals with disabilities assistance with all drugs on their Medicare Part D plans. Although HB 4449 passed both chambers and has widespread support in the General Assembly, inter-chamber squabbling prevented final passage of the bill. CA/IL, will be back in 2009 to fight for passage of this critical legislation.

Equal Pay for Equal Work, HB 5141
This bill would eliminate the youth wage provision, which currently allows workers under the age of 18 to earn fifty cents less per hour than the statewide minimum wage. HB 5141 passed the House 62-51; however CA/IL and our coalition partners were unable to garner enough support in the Senate.

Homeowner Protection Act, HB 2973
This bill provides protection of up to 60 days on mortgage foreclosures for homeowners that enter financial counseling. The legislation requires lenders to notify homeowners, who are delinquent on mortgage payments, that they have 30 days to seek mortgage counseling services to get back on track. If a borrower enters counseling, they would get an additional 30 day moratorium on foreclosure in order to work out a payment plan or refinance option. The bill awaits action in the Illinois House.

2008 State Legislative Priorities
Predatory Lending Reform, SB 1993
CA/IL continues to lead the Msgr. John Egan Campaign for Payday Loan Reform. The Egan Campaign is working to reform the regulation of short-term loans in Illinois, which lock consumers into an insurmountable cycle of debt. After an intense year of negotiations, meetings, and strategizing with our legislative champion, Representative Julie Hamos, The Egan Campaign is gearing up for a major push for passage of a reform bill in 2009. In the spring of 2008, the Public Action Foundation partnered with the Woodstock Institute to release a new study of post-Payday Loan Reform Act lending practices in Illinois entitled The Illinois Payday Loan Loophole.

Get Involved! Take Action!
Your participation makes a difference! To learn more about our campaigns and get involved, visit our revamped website: www.citizenaction-il.org.