

Single Payer Campaign to Begin New Push

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The Campaign for a Healthy California on Wednesday denounced the failure of the California Senate to pass SB 810, the California Universal Care Act. The bill died when it remained two votes short of passage.

Democrats fell short of previous levels of support, which successfully passed similar bills through the legislature twice before, only to be vetoed by then Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. This year 19 voted in favor of the bill, two against, and four abstaining in spite of intensive efforts at persuasion by grassroots proponents. The bill received no support from Republicans.

The California Universal Care Act would have created a single public health insurance program for all Californians, much like an improved Medicare-for-All plan that has been proposed at the federal level.

CHC member organizations spoke out against the disappointing vote, "Nurses will not give up on winning guaranteed universal healthcare, like SB 810" stated DeAnn McEwen, RN, Co-President of the California Nurses Association, "because we will not abandon our patients who need this vital reform."

Nan Brasmer, President of the California Alliance for Retired Americans, stated: "This is a very sad day for seniors and all Californians. With millions of us uninsured or underinsured, SB 810 offered the only solution to our skyrocketing health care costs while covering everyone. And the added bonus is that it would save the State billions of dollars once implemented, at a time when essential programs for seniors are being slashed and out of pocket costs for health care have gone through the roof. We will continue to fight for single payer in the legislature and at the ballot box."

SB 810 would create a new California Healthcare System to provide health insurance for all Californians, replacing the private insurance providers. Critics claim that such a system, often referred to as "single payer," would be too costly. "Not true," said Dr. Henry L. Abrons, President

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of PNHP California. “Currently the U.S. spends twice as much as any other country on health care. We have plenty of money in the system, enough to insure 100% of us; we just need to spend it more wisely.” He continued, “The best way to save money is to take the private insurers out of the system. They are responsible for 30% of each healthcare dollar being lost to pay for exorbitant CEO salaries, lobbyists, sales and marketing, administration and shareholder profit. Medicare's overhead by contrast is only 3%. Californians would still be free to seek services from any medical provider in the private sector -- only the financing would change. The difference is that that everyone in California would be fully covered.”

Joseph Foy, spokesman for the California Health Professional Student Alliance said, “Grassroots activists are not deterred by this setback in the Senate. The movement for single-payer health insurance is growing stronger every day among students who are the doctors, nurses, and other caregivers of the future.”

“Healthcare is a human right,” Progressive Democrats of America's California State Coordinator and Emergency Physician Dr Bill Honigman stated, “It is immoral for businesses to profit from the illness of others, just as we would not expect them to profit from other public services such as police, fire, or education.”

“We're disappointed today, but this is just the beginning of our efforts to win quality, comprehensive health care for all,” said Pilar Schiavo, the CHC Campaign Coordinator, “We will continue to build on the momentum we have created through our recent actions and statewide activism, and build an even broader and more powerful grass roots movement to ensure we win universal healthcare in California.”

The Campaign for a Healthy California represents over 1.4 million Californians and includes: California Alliance for Retired Americans, Physicians for a National Health Program – California, California Health Professional Student Alliance, Communication Workers of America - District 9 (California & Nevada), Health Care For All, Single Payer Now, California Nurses Association, California OneCare, California School Employee Association, Democracy For America, The Progressive Caucus of California, and Progressive Democrats of America.

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