

A Bit of Good News ...

The Affordable Care Act is designed to begin reforming an entrenched patchwork of programs. Although the ACA builds on the current employer-based system and Medicaid, it provides support and incentives for states, health care providers, and payers to test innovations in how we pay for and deliver care. The ACA allows states to go further and opt out of the ACA in 2017, which means Maine can create a more comprehensive, less expensive system.

... Here's the Bad News

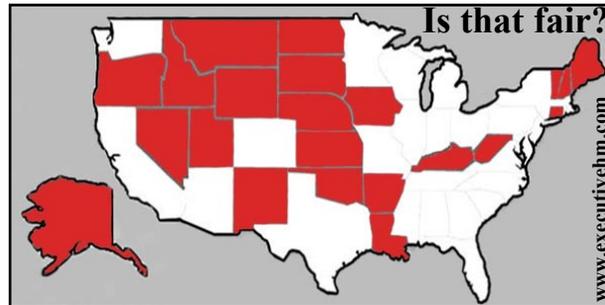
When we don't believe that everyone should have health care, this is what can happen. As the Affordable Care Act is implemented at the Old Rochester School in Massachusetts, the School Committee is proposing to shift 50% of healthcare premium costs onto new employees — cooks, custodians and maintenance workers. Cooks, who have a starting pay of \$13,300 a year, would have to spend 80% of their income on health insurance. Their remaining 20% is equal to earnings of \$2 an hour! If they refuse they face heavy fines, due to the individual mandate that they must have insurance.

Will We Walk the Walk?

“Health care is not just another commodity. It is not a gift to be rationed based on the ability to pay. It is time to make universal health insurance a national priority, so that the basic right to health care can finally become a reality for every American.”

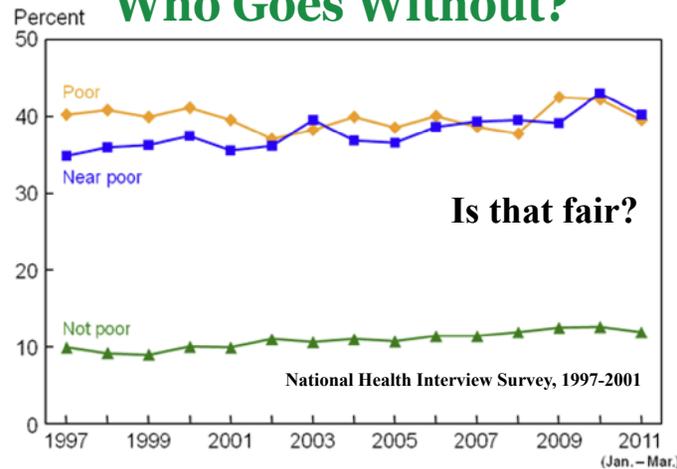
-- Senator Ted Kennedy, 2003

46 Million Uninsured



That's 18%, equal to the population of 22 states combined.

Who Goes Without?



It's the poor or near poor who don't have health insurance.

No, It is not fair!

The World Medical Association, founded in 1947 by physicians from 27 countries, now includes 100 national medical associations. It is an independent group working to set high standards for medical care. They say: “The right to health was first articulated in the WHO Constitution which states that ‘The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being...’”

According to the United Nations ...

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”

-- Article 25, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, and signed by the United States

Healthcare is a Human Right

Welcome to the first Issue, a publication of Maine AllCare, on the web at:

www.maineallcare.org

Our first question is whether we in Maine believe that all people should receive healthcare because it is a human right. Among developed nations, the U.S. stands nearly alone in our failure to accept healthcare as a human right largely due to characteristic American ideologies of individualism and self-determination, distrust of government, and reliance on the private sector to address social concerns. While the government does step in to provide a safety net for the gaps in private insurance through programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, the Military Health Services System, Department of Veterans Affairs, and workers' compensation, millions of other Americans are left out of the system. This goes against the human rights policies set forth by global institutions which the United States helped develop.

We would welcome your response to this issue or suggestions for future Issues. Please respond on our website by emailing us at:

info@maineallcare.org

and please write *Newsletter* in the Subject line.

-- Karen Johnson, Editor

Welcome to Maine's Health Care is a Human Right Campaign

by Jennie Pirkle, Maine People's Alliance, a 31 year old grassroots organization with more than 32,000 members statewide, that has been working on universal healthcare for most of those years.

Maine's state motto is *Dirigo*, meaning "I Lead." For many years, Maine had lived up to our motto in the healthcare world. We have one of the nation's lowest percentages of uninsured residents and we have traditionally had stronger consumer protections than most other states. But this has never been good enough. We have still struggled with constantly rising health care costs and unaffordable insurance options. There have been times when we have come close to winning, but we have always heard from legislators and other policy makers that universal, single payer healthcare was just not politically possible, that there were too many barriers, too many unanswered questions.

In 2009 the Vermont Worker's Center began a grassroots campaign called Health Care is a Human Right. They were a small organization, with only a few staff and volunteers, but they realized that in order to win universal health care they had to change what was politically possible. They started talking to their friends, neighbors, churches, and other groups about the health care crisis. The first step needs to be agreeing on the problem. The grassroots strategy of talking to everyone they could find, agreeing that Health Care is a Human right, and that our current system was denying people this right, allowed Vermont to show their legislators and policy makers that not only was universal health care politically possible, but that being a health care is a human right champion was the way to win an election. Vermont was successful at passing universal health care.

Here in Maine we are following Vermont's example. The Maine State Nurses Association, the Maine AFL-CIO, and the Maine People's Alliance have been working together since last summer to design our own Health Care is a Human Rights campaign. This summer we will be working with partners like Maine AllCare, the Southern Maine Worker's Center, and others to talk to our friends, co-workers, and neighbors about our health care crisis and a need for a system that is based on the human rights principles of universality, equity, transparency, accountability, and participation. The human rights principles will help all of us, including our lawmakers, determine if solutions that are proposed will protect our human rights. Universality means that everyone must have access to comprehensive, equal high-quality healthcare. Everyone; no exceptions.

Equity means that healthcare resources and financing must be shared equitably, so that everyone gets what they need and pays what they can. A government run system that includes everyone and that is paid for with taxes can help us achieve equity. There must be no systemic barriers to accessing care.

Accountability means that government has an obligation to establish a healthcare system that meets human rights principles, and this system must be accountable to the people it serves. Our current system is not accountable because only a small number of shareholders have a say in a for profit insurance company. A government run system will allow everyone to have their voice heard.

Transparency means the healthcare system must be open with regard to information, decision-making, and management. Again our current system is not at all transparent. Most people do not know how their insurance premiums are being managed, and have no decision-making capabilities.

Participation means that the healthcare system must enable meaningful public participation in all decision affecting people's right to health care, including the design and operation of the system itself. A system that works for the people must be run by the people. In order for Maine to successfully follow in Vermont's footsteps and create a path to health care as a public good, we need everyone to get involved. I urge you to contact one of the organizations involved in the campaign and to visit:

www.mainepeoplesalliance.org/ and [www.facebook.com/Maine Health Care is a Human Right](http://www.facebook.com/MaineHealthCareisHumanRight)

What are our priorities?

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."



... hanging from a cross of iron."

--Dwight Eisenhower

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."

-- Rev. Martin Luther King

Do Americans Believe It?

64% of Americans believe that the government has a responsibility to ensure universal health care.

-- According to a CBS News/
New York Times poll conducted in 2007

... And Yet

"The United States is the ONLY developed country that lets insurance companies profit from basic health coverage."

-- T. R. Reid, The Washington Post,
8/23/09

For sources and further reading, go to:

www.maineallcare.org