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USW Applauds Historic Step for Health Care Reform

Workers, Retirees Urge Swift Action by Senate

Pittsburgh – The United Steelworkers (USW) today applauded the historic vote by the U.S. House of Representatives to pass health insurance reform and called on the Senate to act swiftly on the corrections legislation that will help millions of Americans.

“Today’s historic vote was a huge step in the right direction. Reform will help get our economy back on track by lowering skyrocketing health care costs, saving jobs and relieving working families and businesses from the crushing medical bills that are causing bankruptcy and heartache,” said Leo W. Gerard, International President of the USW.

“It not only makes sense economically, but it’s morally the right thing to do. Our union has fought for a long time for health care for all. We consider it a basic human right. These reforms are desperately needed and move us a huge step towards that goal. We urge the Senate to act quickly to pass the corrections bill and move this historic legislation to President Obama’s desk,” Gerard said.

The legislation would extend coverage to an estimated 32 million uninsured, bar insurers from denying coverage on the basis of existing medical conditions and cut federal deficits by an estimated \$138 billion over a decade.

“The bill isn’t perfect, but it makes progress,” Gerard said. “We appreciate so much the members of the House who had the courage to stand up against the right wing and the insurance special interests and stand up for working families, and we look forward to the Senate doing the same.”

The legislation would:

- Extend health insurance coverage to millions of uninsured persons, assuring coverage for 95 percent of Americans;
- Ensure that coverage is affordable by providing substantial subsidies for middle income families;
- Implement insurance market reforms to outlaw abusive practices by insurance companies, such as denying coverage to individuals with pre-existing conditions;
- Provide assistance to employers and VEBAs to encourage them to continue coverage for pre-Medicare retirees;

- Close the Medicare Part D “doughnut hole” that costs our seniors hundreds or even thousands of dollars in prescription drug costs; and
- Reduce costs for individuals and businesses by eliminating most uncompensated care, reforming the delivery and provider payment systems, and creating exchanges to facilitate coverage in a cost-effective manner.

The USW represents 850,000 workers in the U.S. and Canada employed in the industries of metals, rubber, chemicals, paper, oil refining and the service sector. For more information: www.usw.org/.

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