

August 11 Health Care Day of Action

Welcome/credential (COR/PICO), Angélica Campos

Opening Prayer, The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring

Why we are here / faith perspective (Rev Arlene)

- Health care reform is an **important matter of faith for me**, my congregation, **and all of us in COR and PICO**. We strongly believe that the time is now to pass comprehensive health care reform in our country.
- Why? Because **families in our parishes and neighborhoods are suffering** from a lack of affordable, quality healthcare. Some families don't have any health care coverage at all, and they need it now. Many others have coverage, but it doesn't cover the care they need, and comes with ever-increasing premiums and out-of-pocket expenses. Practically everyone in our communities, even those with decent coverage, live with growing fears about the impact of job loss or a major medical emergency on their health insurance coverage and care. Our people are afraid of losing their insurance, maxing out benefits, and not being able to afford or receive needed care.
- These fears are well founded. In our current economy, up to **15,000 people** are losing their health care every day. *Let me say this again* - every day that health care reform is delayed, 15,000 more people in our nation lose their health insurance. **Right here in Hayward, we are home to the second largest number of uninsured adults in all of Alameda County.**
- We all know people who have **nightmare stories of suddenly finding themselves \$20,000 or \$30,000 in medical debt**, worrying about money at precisely the time when they need to be focused on their health or the needs of a loved one. Some of these people are members of my congregation, and the congregations represented here today. Their needs compel us to act.
- While our ministry with families keeps us keenly aware of the needs in our community, it is **our faith that teaches us that health care is about more than policy, dollars and cents, or ideology**. When thousands of people die each year because they cannot get the health care they need; when half of all families that go into bankruptcy each year file because of medical bills they cannot afford; we know that something more is at stake in this debate.
- **For persons of faith, health care legislation is first and foremost a moral issue**. Reforming health care is a test of our society's moral character. Whether and how well we can come together to heal people's pain and suffering, and whether we put the welfare of *all* of God's

children ahead of special interests that feed off of profit and power—these actions (or inactions) determine our nation’s character and our faithfulness to God.

- I repeat—**our faith values and the needs of our communities compel us** to find practical solutions to problems we all face, and we are here today to call on **Senators Boxer and Feinstein** and **all of our US Senators** and **Congress people** to employ the same moral courage and plumb line that compels us to act, in their legislative actions on health care reform this year. **We also are here to thank Congressman Stark and his colleagues for their work on health care reform and call on him to continue to stand strong for our families.**

Sharing of Health Care Stories / Testimonies

- **Story #1**, Coco Ramirez
- **Story #2**, Tehani Tulittle

Urgency of Now, Michael Wharton

- We are here today with a simple message: the American people want health care reform that makes insurance more affordable for ALL FAMILIES, and we want it THIS YEAR. There will be **NO RECESS FOR HEALTH REFORM.**
- Passing health reform legislation this year is the only way to move reform forward. Failure to pass legislation this year could derail any efforts at reform for years to come, which would be a disaster not only for our families, but also for our economy. **WE CANNOT AFFORD TO WAIT. THE COST OF DOING NOTHING IS UNACCEPTABLE.** We need to keep reform moving forward NOW.
- Obviously, not everyone shares our perspective. There are those who operate from a different perspective than we do, special interest groups that are first and foremost interested in protecting their own pocketbooks, their own profit. To keep reform from moving forward, they are spending millions of dollars on ads meant first and foremost to scare people. To keep us from believing that something better is possible! They say “Slow down! Why the rush?” But what they want to do is delay, delay, delay, in hopes that delay will lead to deny.
- Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. knew what the delay tactic was all about, when he wrote from the Birmingham jail that “justice too long delayed is justice denied.” There comes a time when delay does indeed become an excuse for inaction, for maintaining the status quo.
- For too long, our families have had to deal with “delay.” As we mentioned earlier, each day that we delay another 15,000 people lose coverage. We will wait no longer.

- Rabbi Hillel, an influential Jewish scholar in the 1st century B.C., once said that “If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?” I believe, at this unique moment in time, with the opportunity to make health care work better for American families staring right in front of us, that all of our Members of Congress, and each and every one of us, should look in the mirror and ask ourselves these 3 questions:
 1. If I am not for myself, then who will be for me?
 2. And if I am only for myself, then what am I?
 3. And if not now, when?

What do families gain to benefit from health reform? (Sharon Filippi)

- Congress has been working for months on producing legislation, and right now, there are numerous bills that would make coverage more affordable and accessible for all Americans.
- How would health care reform help you and your family? Well, here are four simple answers:
 1. **Insurance companies would be prohibited from discriminating against you if you get sick.** No more denying people coverage for pre-existing conditions, jacking up rates when people get sick, or forcing people to pay way more than they can afford for getting the care they need.
 2. **If you change jobs or lose your job you would not have to worry about losing your health coverage.** Subsidies would be available based on family income to help people buy health coverage from either private insurance or a public program.
 3. **If you run a small business you’ll get tax credits to buy health coverage for yourself and your employees.** And no longer will you be charged higher rates than large businesses.
 4. **Finally, the skyrocketing cost of health care would be controlled** by paying doctors and hospitals for improving the quality of care they deliver, rather than the number of procedures they order.
- Congress has made some important progress in writing health reform legislation. They need your help in spreading the truth about health reform.

What we want and what we are doing to build support (Lupe Nunez)

- Today, we are taking our message of “No recess for health reform” directly to our Members of Congress, [INSERT NAMES OF YOUR SENATORS AND/OR REPRESENTATIVES]. And our brothers and sisters in the PICO National Network are doing the same across the country, altogether reaching out to 100 Members of Congress, including many key members in this debate.

- But today's event is not a one-time deal. For months now, clergy and faith leaders from PICO, Sojourners, and other religious groups have been preaching and teaching on health care in our congregations.
- We have been holding town hall meetings with our Members of Congress, to build support for reform.
- We have been working with our brothers and sisters of faith in key congressional districts, to make sure that their Members hear a strong level of support from the faith community.
- We have been conducting surveys of congregants in our faith communities to get a sense from them what they are paying for health care now, and what they think is affordable.
- We have been writing letters to the editors and Op-Eds. We have been running radio ads in key states and Congressional districts to show the support from the faith community for reform. We have been making phone calls and sending emails and building a groundswell of support for health reform.
- The month of August is crucial. Health reform legislation has cleared all 3 key House committees and will come up for a full floor vote when Members return in September. The momentum is on our side, but we know that the opposition is organized. They are going to throw everything they've got right now at trying to stop reform. That's why we've got to be twice as organized, and twice as loud.
- **Call to Obama, headed into SF to see Boxer.....**
- Today, the PICO National Network, together with Faith in Public Life, Sojourners, and Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, launched a TV ad featuring people of faith saying clearly that we want health reform.
- Throughout August, we will run paid media, post billboards, as well as continue to hold town hall meetings with Members of Congress.
- We are also putting paid organizers on the ground in key states to help lift up the voice of the faith community and urge their Members of Congress to not delay.
- We will make sure that Congress knows that, there is NO RECESS FOR HEALTH REFORM. After all, there is no recess for families like [STORY #1], who feel the pinch of rising health care costs and eroding coverage. There is no recess for families like [STORY #2], who....
- When Congress returns from recess it should – without delay – pass comprehensive health insurance reform that makes coverage affordable to all families. They should be act knowing that religious voters see health care as an important moral issue and will strongly support health reform, especially if they believe it will also make health care more secure and affordable for their own families.

- And they should act knowing that passage of health insurance reform will be a historic accomplishment that helps families feel more secure and strengthens the nation.

Commissioning Prayer