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The Latest on Health Care Reform

Tired of battling over health care at every contract negotiation? Sick of worrying about what happens to your health care if you lose your job? Think our system costs too much, covers too little and excludes too many? If you do, you're not alone. ***The good news is that we are finally close to reforming this failed system.***

Health Care Reform is Underway – Before Congress adjourned for their August recess, the House of Representatives finished drafting a bill – H.R. 3200 – that would go a long way towards what we need to see for reform. Those who have employer-provided care can keep their same coverage; those who don't will have access to affordable care.

Key aspects of H.R. 3200 include:

- **A public health insurance option** that would compete with private insurer plans to drive down costs,
- **An employer “pay or play” requirement** that makes sure free-rider companies – those that don't pay for employee's health care coverage who ultimately dump their health care costs on the rest of us – either provide insurance or pay their fair share to help fund coverage,
- **Curbs to insurance company abuses** so that pre-existing conditions will be covered and discriminatory practices are no longer tolerated,
- **A temporary reinsurance program** which would help employers and voluntary employees' beneficiary associations (VEBAs) cover health care for retirees who are not yet eligible for Medicare by providing assistance with catastrophic expenses, thereby encouraging employers and VEBAs to continue providing retiree health care coverage,
- And, **H.R. 3200 will not tax health care benefits** that we receive through our jobs.

Getting a Real Solution to the Health Care Crisis Won't be Easy – The Senate has not yet finished their work on a bill, and it could be weaker than the House bill. Meanwhile, corporate-backed anti-health care reform and anti-government groups have begun an aggressive – and at times violent – smear campaign to stop this needed reform. Their goal is to create the impression that a movement against health reform exists, but in reality they are a small, misled fringe that's frightened because we're so close to real reform.

Make sure to educate yourself on the facts as this debate continues!