

## Protecting Medicare on its 46th birthday

On July 30, Medicare celebrated its 46th birthday. Together with Social Security, Medicare represents the crown jewels of the "social insurance model." Medicare provides comprehensive, single-payer health care to nearly every American over 65. Polls show 72 percent of all Americans agree that this right should not be diminished in any way.

Despite such widespread public support, today the entire social insurance model is under broad and systematic attack. From Wisconsin to Florida and New York to California, nearly every state is in the throes of a fiscal crisis brought on by Wall Street greed and is responding by undermining the hard won rights, benefits and programs that sustain working people, their families and their communities. And on Aug. 2, just three days after Medicare's birthday, the "debt cap limit" deadline threatened a complete government shutdown if major cuts were not made to Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and other programs.

The entire labor movement is mobilizing to defend Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. The National Nurses United has launched its Main Street Contract Campaign calling for the defense and expansion of the social safety net by making Wall Street pay. Many local and state coalitions are also emerging around these issues.

The Labor Campaign for Single Payer advocates the "high road solution" to these unprecedented attacks on the well-being and security of workers everywhere: solve health

care first, make the rich pay their fair share and transfer resources from military expenditures and corporate welfare to programs benefiting working people. In particular, we work to improve and strengthen Medicare by expanding it to everyone in America. The entire budget deficit would disappear if per capita health care costs in the U.S. were the same as in any other industrialized country with a national health care system.

The choice couldn't be clearer: continue to strip away basic benefits and rights from hard-working Americans or take on Wall Street and the for-profit health care industry by fighting to make health care a right and to reallocate resources to meet human needs.

We urge you to take the occasion of Medicare's 46th birthday to join with others who are working to defend and expand the social insurance model and to raise the call for Medicare-for-All as a solution to the crisis. Here are a few things you can do to organize around this issue:

- Download Healthcare NOW's "Medicare is the Solution" Organizer's Toolkit and work with others in your community to organize a birthday celebration.
- Participate in the Progressive Democrats of America's Healthcare Not Warfare Brown Bag Lunch Vigils.
- Organize a delegation to meet with your congressional representatives and senators during the summer recess. Tell them you will not support anyone who votes to cut, undermine or weaken essential social insurance programs. Ask them to co-sponsor S.703/HR 1200—the Sanders/McDermott Health Security Act of 2011 (endorsed by the AFL-CIO) and HR 676—the Conyers Medicare for All Bill.

The stakes couldn't be higher. The next few months could very well determine the fate of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. We need your active participation to help turn the tide and build the movement for Medicare-for-All.

**In Solidarity,**  
**Mark Dudzic**  
**National Coordinator**



the Massachusetts  
**nurse**

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