

## **THE HEALTH CARE DEBATE:** *by Local 13 Secretary-Treasurer Pat Austin*

During the past ten years, or more, one of the biggest issues during contract negotiations with employers has been the cost of health care coverage for their employees. Health care premiums for employers have almost doubled during the past decade and this has resulted in higher premium costs, higher deductibles, higher prescription co-pays, and higher out-of-pocket expense to employees overall. Along with these tangible higher health-care costs, for profit insurance companies have systematically denied life-saving care (as experimental), moved drugs to the highest co-pay, and resorted to any and all medical delivery cost-cutting measures – all in the name of **PROFIT** for the company and **OBSCENE PAY** for the insurance company executives. **THIS CANNOT CONTINUE.** Congressional action to overhaul our health care system is feverishly underway and there is hope that change will come. What kind of change is still being debated.

There are segments, however, in our society who are fighting, tooth and nail, to stop health care reform. Why? Because they will have to deliver health care to all – no exclusions for pre-existing illnesses or higher premiums for pre-existing illness. They will be unable to drop your coverage if, heaven forbid, you become really sick even though you have paid premiums for years. They will be made to deliver cost effective quality health care at a reasonable price. And, with a public option choice for the American people, with low administrative costs, real competition will lower costs throughout the private insurance industry.

To those people who say, “I’m happy with my medical insurance and don’t want anybody messing with it,” I say you could be uninsured tomorrow. Get it – everyone needs a safety net – and reforming this country’s health care system would provide that safety net and provide health coverage for approximately 97% of Americans. **HEALTH CARE IS A RIGHT, NOT A PRIVILEGE.**

Please contact your Congressional representatives and let them know that you support health care reform with a public option. We cannot let the minority of naysayers derail the most important issue of our time.