



NJ Health Care For America Now Tele Press Conference Call
Thursday, August 6, 2009 11:00 a.m.

Statement of Eve Weissman, Health Care Campaign Coordinator, NJ Citizen Action

Good morning. My name is Eve Weissman. I am the Health Care Campaign Coordinator for NJ Citizen Action, the State's largest, independent citizen watchdog organization representing over 60,000 families and over 100 organizations across the State. NJ Citizen Action is a proud member of the Health Care For America Now (HCAN) Campaign, a grassroots alliance comprised of over 1,000 organizations representing over 30 million people in 46 states across the country. HCAN's goal is to pass health care reform in 2009 that guarantees high quality, affordable health care for all.

I am happy to be joined this morning by NJ Congressman Frank Pallone, Mandy Spears, Health Policy Advisor to Congressman Bill Pascrell, and a number of our Health Care For America Now Partners and Allies, many of whom you will hear from shortly.

According to a March 2009 report by Families USA, nearly one out of three people in New Jersey under the age of 65 went without health insurance for all or part of the two year period 2007 to 2008 and nearly 2.4 million uninsured New Jerseyans, more than three-quarters, went without health coverage for six months or longer during this period. For these people, health care reform cannot wait another year. Something needs to be done now.

Today, we call on every Member of NJ's Congressional Delegation to support the health care bill in the U.S. House of Representatives, H.R. 3200 – America's Affordable Health Choices Act. This legislation would expand access to quality, affordable health care for millions of New Jerseyans and lower across-the-board costs in our health care system. Recent analysis by the House Energy and Commerce Committee shows that every Congressional District in New Jersey will benefit from this bill.

We urge NJ Congressmen Leonard Lance, from the 7th Congressional District and Frank LoBiondo, from the 2nd Congressional District, to reconsider their positions against this important piece of legislation which will go a long way to benefit families, small businesses, and seniors in their very own districts. We also call on Congressman John Adler, from NJ's 3rd Congressional District, who has expressed some reservations about the House bill, to stand firm with his House colleagues including Representatives Pallone and Pascrell in supporting this critical legislation.

H.R. 3200 will help our seniors. According to analysis by the House Energy and Commerce Committee, each year, 8,100 seniors in Representative Lance's district and 9,600 seniors in Representative LoBiondo's district hit the Medicare Part D donut hole, forcing them to pay full cost for their prescription drugs. H.R. 3200 would provide immediate relief, cutting brand name drug costs in the donut hole by 50% and ultimately eliminating the donut hole completely.

H.R. 3200 is deficit neutral and fully paid for by making the Medicare and Medicaid programs more efficient and by charging an income surtax on the very wealthiest Americans. This surtax would not affect 96.2% of taxpayers in Congressman Lance's District and 99.2% of taxpayers in Congressman LoBiondo's District.

We will now hear from Congressman Pallone, Many Spears and our HCAN partners about the other important benefits of this critical legislation.