

Sisters Organize for Survival

A Project of Radical Women

Talking Points on SOS Campaign to Save Basic Health

What is the Washington State Basic Health Plan?

- This is a solid system that is considered a national model. It has been around for 25 years and survived many economic cycles. It has covered up to 100,000 people. It is desperately needed by the more than 70,000 people on the waiting list and the 900,000 people in the state with no health insurance.
- Last year, the legislature mandated a 43% cut to the program. Higher monthly payments and increased annual deductibles have already begun to force thousands of the most vulnerable recipients off the plan.
- The plan works by the state providing a public subsidy to allow very low-income working people to pay a reduced fee for private plans offered by several different HMOs and insurance companies. Because it covers a large pool of people, the state and participants should be able to pay lower rates. However, out-of-control rate hikes from insurance companies over the last 20 years have caused huge increases in the amount the state pays, which is one reason why the Basic Health budget has grown.

It's in the public interest to preserve and expand Basic Health.

- People without medical insurance pay more for services than insurance companies that are able to negotiate lower rates.
- People without insurance rely on the most expensive forms of care, such as emergency rooms. Hospitals pass on the cost of uninsured treatment to other patients. The result is a lower level of health for the individual and the community.
- With the economic crisis, more and more people need affordable healthcare due to layoffs, cuts in employer benefits, and inability to pay the high cost of insurance.

Where will the money come from to fully fund Basic Health?

- Washington has the most regressive tax structure in the nation. Sales taxes and property taxes hit low-income and working people disproportionately. Reliance on regressive taxes has caused a huge drop in state tax revenue that is decimating vital services. The

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poorest 20% of the population pays 17.3% of their income in taxes, while the richest 1% pay only 2.9% of their income in taxes.

- Washington needs a total overhaul of the current tax system. We need a graduated income tax that would replace the sales tax and ease the property tax burden. A progressive tax on individuals and corporate profits is fairer and more stable. Forty-three U.S. states have some form of income tax.

What about federal health care reform?

- *If* national health care reform passes, it won't be fully in place for many years.
- The state plan could fill gaps for people and services not covered by the federal plan—such as immigrants and abortion coverage.

Basic Health has a proven track record—it works! It is a good option for low-income people who need health care coverage.

For more information and resources on the Basic Health Plan and the fight to save it, go to www.RadicalWomen.org, call (206)722-6057, or email RWseattle@mindspring.com.