

### ***Why promoting health care reform is in our interest***

1. The current system is financially unsustainable.
  - Employers will continue to whittle down our benefits until, like much of the private sector, they will no longer resemble what we now have and will dramatically shift costs to our members.
  - Rapidly increasing insurance costs will further jeopardize your early retirement benefits ***which are normally linked to the benefits of active employees.*** (Don't fall prey to the false hope: "If we can only sustain the status quo until I retire").
  - Growing legions of uninsured threaten to add significant costs to the premiums of those who remain insured. Currently those costs are about \$1,000 per year per family plan.
  - As private sector employers continue shedding their benefits, we see the burden of health care costs being disproportionately borne by unionized public sector employees. Just a few years ago, these costs were borne equally by spousal plans. Now we see that spouses in the private sector often opt out of costly poor coverage plans, placing the entire burden on the insurer of public sector workers.
  - There is pressure to reduce health care packages. Members take pride in their benefits, and Members want to see everyone have access to quality care.
  - Do we join or oppose growing public support for health care reform? 22 recent referenda supporting health care reform on the ballot last fall passed with overwhelming margins. Do we want to be aligned with a failing status quo, or be perceived as leading the effort for health care reform?
  - If we are not perceived as playing a leadership role in reform, what influence can we expect have on such reform on important issues like maintaining our health care-related collective bargaining rights?

(Over)

## WEAC Health Care Reform 2009

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### 2. **Arguments that allay our members' fears of embracing federal health care reform.**

- Health insurance **benefits will remain a mandatory subject of bargaining.**
- Employee premium shares, deductibles and other plan features are mandatory subjects of bargaining and, **like WRS contributions, the employee's share of such costs can be picked by employers.**
- **Obama's plan lowers costs** through competition offered by government plans. This will take much of the cost of the uninsured and underinsured out of our premiums, and reduce the cost of health care to our employers, so more money can be spent on salaries.
- **The Obama plan allows you to keep the plan you have if you prefer it.** It also offers a public plan that both reduces costs of the uninsured and underinsured, and shifts costs back to the private sector employers that have been shedding benefits.
- **Health care should be available to everyone in the communities that support and make up our great schools.** Members are supporting access to health care for everyone in the community.
- **We increase the eligibility of our own members for coverage.** Currently ESP members are losing their health care benefits due to cost and contractual eligibility requirements. In interest arbitration, ESP employees can form the internal comparables for teachers that will be afforded significant weight when employers seek major insurance concessions.
- **Which side of history would you have wanted to be on** during the struggles for workers' rights, Civil Rights, Medicare, and Social Security? Like these landmark struggles, health care reform is the moral and social justice issue of our time. What will you tell your children and grandchildren you did when it came to the issue of health care reform?