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Pro-choice groups assail White House anti-abortion move

By Susan Webb

Women's and reproductive rights groups are condemning the Obama administration's decision to exclude abortion coverage from a new high-risk insurance plan created under the health reform law. Planned Parenthood, the National Organization for Women, the Center for Reproductive Rights, and NARAL Pro-Choice America have all assailed the move.

Nancy Northrup, president of the Center for Reproductive Rights said the White House, in taking this action, had gone "out of its way to propose denying necessary health care coverage to the most vulnerable American women."

The policy was announced July 14 by the Department of Health and Human Services. It said abortions will not will not be covered in the newly created Pre-existing Condition Insurance Plan (PCIP), "except in the cases of rape or incest, or where the life of the woman would be endangered."

The Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan is a transitional program to provide coverage between now and 2014 to people who have been denied health insurance because of pre-existing health conditions. In 2014 new insurance exchanges will open that will bar such coverage denials.

But those who are in need of this special plan



are the very ones most vulnerable to high-risk pregnancies where abortion is indicated, women's advocates say.

Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards pointed out that "the very women who need to purchase private health insurance in the new high-risk pools are likely to be more vulnerable to medically complicated pregnancies." The new policy, she said in a statement, "flies in the face of the intent of the high-risk pools that were meant

T H I S W E E K :

- **Groups assail White House anti-abortion move**
- **Editorial: New START for real security**
- **Movement for justice for Oscar Grant maps next steps**
- **Entrenamiento en desobediencia civil para trabajadores**
- **Congressional hearing held on Delphi pension issues**

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to meet the medical needs of some of the most vulnerable women in this country."

The proposed restrictions are not required by any law, including the recently enacted health reform law, Richards and Northrup said.

Planned Parenthood sent out an e-mail alert

Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice are urging the public to contact the White House and tell the administration to reverse this decision.

calling the proposed restriction a “Stupak-like ruling.” That is a reference to the amendment introduced by Reps. Bart Stupak, D-Mich., and Joe Pitts, R-Pa., that would have barred coverage of abortion even where women paid with their own money. The compromise included in the final health reform bill imposes complicated restrictions but does allow women to purchase abortion coverage if they pay for that separately.

“The decision announced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on Thursday goes beyond even these restrictions” by flatly excluding abortion coverage from the high-risk insurance plan except for limited cases, Planned Parenthood said.

“The high-risk insurance pools are for some of the most medically vulnerable women in the country - those with pre-existing conditions such as breast and ovarian cancer, AIDS, diabetes, and other conditions that may make pregnancy extraordinarily dangerous,” the group points out. “These women will be locked out from abortion

coverage, even if they pay for it out of their own pockets.”

“We need to make sure the Obama administration knows this is unacceptable.”

Planned Parenthood points out that its primary goal is reducing unintended pregnancies, especially the alarmingly high number of teenage pregnancies in the U.S.

“At the same time,” it says, “to protect their health and the health of their families, women facing an unintended pregnancy must have access to safe, legal abortion services without interference from the government. Decisions about childbearing should be made by a woman in consultation with her family and doctor - not by politicians.”

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Susan Webb writes for the People's World.

We also believe spending on U.S. nukes and the facilities to maintain them must be drastically reduced.

New START for real security

By PW Editorial Board

Senate hearings on the New START treaty to cut U.S. and Russian long-range nuclear weapons arsenals have resumed, with a vote possible in coming weeks. Ratification requires a two-thirds majority of senators.

Support for the agreement, signed in April by President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, ranges from longstanding advocates of complete nuclear disarmament to such “top national security leaders” as former Secretary of Defense William Perry and former Secretary of State George Shultz.

But, like all positive Obama administration initiatives, it is also subject to a barrage of far-right attacks.

Republicans claim New START would hinder U.S. development of missile defenses. Compliance supposedly can't be verified. The pact allegedly restrains the U.S. more than the Russians. And so on.

The right wing is also holding the pact hostage to demands for greater U.S. spending on nuclear weapons. Those demands appear to be bearing fruit, with the administration projecting

nuclear weapons spending rising from the present \$6.4 billion to some \$9 billion in 2018, and plans afoot to “modernize” both the weapons and the weapons complex.

At their root, views of the treaty hinge on views of national security. If one believes, as we do, that complete, worldwide nuclear disarmament is ultimately essential for our national security, New START is a small but vital step on the road toward that goal - a goal President Obama has endorsed.

We also believe spending on U.S. nukes and the facilities to maintain them must be drastically reduced, both to make those resources available for human needs and to make sure nuclear weapons are truly on their way out.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors got it right last month when it unanimously called for ratification of New START and the Comprehensive Test Ban treaty “without conditions and without delay” and urged Congress to “redirect [nuclear weapons] funds to meet the urgent needs of cities.”

We urge readers to contact their senators and tell them to ratify New Start.

Movement for justice for Oscar Grant maps next steps

By Luis Rivas

At Chuco's Justice Center in Englewood Calif, more than 50 people met this week to discuss the next steps in the movement for justice for Oscar Grant III following the hugely disappointing and unpopular involuntary manslaughter verdict for former Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) officer Johannes Mehserle.

Mehserle, 28, had also faced more serious charges of second degree murder and voluntary manslaughter in the Jan. 1, 2009, killing.

Mehserle alleged that Grant and his friends represented a serious threat to police seeking to arrest them, and claimed he meant to use his taser but confused it with his gun.

The prosecution contended that Mehserle's training, and the safeguards against unintentional use of a gun, made confusing the two weapons impossible.

No African American jurors were on the jury.

The meeting here was organized by the Los Angeles Coalition for Justice for Oscar Grant, which is made up of teachers, lawyers, professors, students, activists and ordinary members of the community. It's a collective that works to bring justice for the slain black youth and examine social issues.

The meeting addressed what the next steps should be in ensuring that Mehserle receives the maximum sentencing.

In its verdict, the jury added a sentencing enhancement for Mehserle's use of a gun. The sentencing date has been postponed several times and is now reportedly scheduled for sometime in October.

There is a real potential for the jury's gun enhancement addition to the involuntary manslaughter charge to be dropped at the sentencing, and with that could come a reduction of the sentence to time served (counting Mehserle's current incarceration at Los Angeles County Jail; in other words, no further jail time) with probation, ac-



ording to a lawyer acting as legal adviser to the coalition. The maximum sentencing possible is 14 years.

The coalition will be working on adding pressure on the trial's presiding judge, Robert J. Perry, to ensure that the maximum sentence is given. In addition, the group will also focus vigilant attention on the federal government's review of the case, announced right after the verdict was issued. That review involves the FBI, the U.S. Attorney's office and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Although the failure to convict Mehserle of murder or voluntary manslaughter sparked much anger, many noted that the verdict does mark the first time in California a police officer has been convicted for a killing in the line of duty. But, they said, the struggle for justice for Oscar Grant is far from over.

The coalition plans on keeping the momentum going by organizing with churches, unions, communities, organizations, families and students at high schools, colleges and university campuses.

The Los Angeles Coalition for Justice for Oscar Grant is asking the public to come out in droves on the day of sentencing in Los Angeles.

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Congressional hearing held on Delphi pension issues

By Bruce Bostick

Ohio is losing \$58 million a year because our pensions were cut, stated Bruce Gump, president of the Delphi Salaried Retirees Committee, in testimony at a hearing of the Congressional Finances Committee in Canfield, Ohio, July 14. Ohio Congressmen Charlie Wilson and Tim Ryan were instrumental in bringing the hearing to Austintown to investigate cuts made by the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corp. (PBGC).

Although Delphi, a former subsidiary of General Motors, was bankrupt, its pension plan was fully funded but became intertwined in the GM bankruptcy and was taken over by the PBGC resulting in cuts in benefits and health care. The retirees filed a lawsuit protesting the cuts.

"This situation is part of an overall attack on retiree security," said Rep. Ryan. "It needs to be addressed as part of a national solution to the issue of retiree security."

He called for passage of the Protecting American Retirees in Corporate Bankruptcies Act (HR 4677/ S 3033) that would move worker/retiree claims from the bottom to the top in corporate bankruptcies.

"Retirees receiving PBGC pensions are hardly living 'the life of Riley,' said Norm Wernet, Ohio director of the Alliance of Retired Americans. "The average PBGC-based pension for an Ohio retiree is only \$6,156 a year."

He urged passage of jobs bills and requiring the wealthy, who do not now pay Social Security taxes, to do so.

The Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) also voiced support for these measures.

Entrenamiento en desobediencia civil para trabajadores en hoteles en 15 ciudades

Por John Wojcik

Más de 1.000 cocineros, lavaplatos y trabajadores en mantenimiento de hoteles están llevando a cabo una parada muy especial esta semana distinta de su habitual rutina de ir y venir de su casa al trabajo. Se trata de un entrenamiento de dos horas para saber como se interrumpe el trabajo regular en un acto de desobediencia civil que los trabajadores de los hoteles van a llevar a cabo el 22 de Julio en todos los hoteles de la cadena Hyatt en 15 ciudades de los Estados Unidos.

Los trabajadores de los hoteles dicen que ellos han tenido que soporitar recortes de personal, reducción de las horas de trabajo y otros perjuicios. Y que ahora ellos en protesta se van a sentar en las calles porque se cansaron de tanto abuso y que no lo van a tolerar en el futuro. El día martes dos cientos de ellos estuvieron en el entrenamiento. Este se lleva a cabo en el auditorio de la Unión International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers por el personal de la Unión Unite Here de los trabajadores de hoteles. En un inmenso telón de fondo del salón se destacan las palabras proyectadas del ilustre poeta romano Juvenal del segundo siglo: "No dudes en ponerte en peligro de prisión si eso va a tener consecuencias favorables".

Entre los trabajadores asistentes se encontraba Renee Walker, una joven que había sido despedida de su trabajo en el Hotel Blackstone de Chicago hace un año y que estaba celebrando la recuperación de su trabajo, junto con su salario por un año, por orden de la corte, a quien le preguntaron por que ella esta cooperando en esta desobediencia civil con trabajadores de otro hotel. Renee con lagrimas en los ojos contestó: "Yo no sabia que hacer cuando ellos me despidieron de mi trabajo". Que su Unión le dijo: "Renee nosotros sabemos lo que vamos a hacer: vamos a luchar contra esta medida del patrón. Así se hizo, nosotros luchamos y ganamos. Me voy a sentar a las calles con mis hermanos y hermanos trabajadores de los hoteles Hyatt porque no quiero que a nadie le pase lo que yo sufrí por la injusticia del Hotel Blackstone."

En su entrenamiento de la técnica de desobediencia civil se formaron grupos de 10 personas, negros, latinos, blancos, jóvenes y viejos, llenaron los pisos del auditorio, sentados y entrelazados los brazos. Renee Walker había dicho: "La declaración que estamos haciendo aquí con esta manifestación pacifica y la que haremos en Julio 22 es que nosotros somos seres humanos."

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