

Inside this issue:

**Pg. 1 - Health Care
Action Alert**

**Pg. 4 - Activists
Needed!**



Universal Health Care - A Step in the Right Direction and an Opportunity to Help

One of the core beliefs shared by California Council of Churches and California Church IMPACT is that a society, to be moral and just, must provide all people with access to health care. We are currently developing a congregational study guide, funded by the California Endowment, that will examine faith principles that shape our understanding of health care not as a commodity but as a human right. Created by former Interim Director, Nancy Nielsen, the guide will examine the links between Biblical precepts and our creation of a social ethic on the development of a healthy society where no one goes without adequate medical care.

The social contract since World War II provides that the majority of Californians receive health care through their employers. Today 50 percent are covered through their or their spouse's workplace. Twenty-eight percent receive some form of public coverage (Medicare, Medi-Cal, Healthy Families.) However, seventeen percent of Californians and their families have no health insurance at all, despite the fact that they are nearly all working. Without health insurance, families delay medical care, then obtain it through costly emergency room use billed at the highest rates. Medical debt is the cause of half of all personal bankruptcy, and unpaid bills fall to insurance rate payers and tax payers to absorb. **Continued on pg. 3**

Convocation to Focus on Stakes for People of Faith

Progressive Christians Uniting and other groups are presenting a convocation and rally on the afternoon of **Sunday, Sept. 12**, highlighting the "high stakes for people of faith" in the forthcoming national election.

The event will take place at the historic Ward AME Church in Los Angeles (1177 W. 25th Steet near the 110 freeway). Start time is 2 p.m. Featured speakers include Rev. James A. Forbes, Jr., of New York's Riverside Church, Congressman George Miller, and authors Arianna Huffington and Ron Suskind. State Senator Sheila Kuehl will offer a California perspective on ballot and budget issues, and there will be practical workshops on ways in which congregations can become more effective in the electoral arena without jeopardizing their not-for-profit status.

There is no registration fee, but a \$10 contribution toward conference expenses is requested. For detailed information or for directions to the church, contact Progressive Christians Uniting at 909-397-5850 or by e-mail to pcu@pcu-la.org.

Los Angeles County Faith Based Child Care Providers Network Continues to Grow

The Los Angeles County Faith Based Child Care Providers Network, funded through a grant from First 5 LA, continues to grow! This summer we are offering a countywide workshop on **Renovating Playgrounds: Models, Resources, and Collaborations** on Thursday, July 29th at 1:30 pm. Come and discover how the LA Conservation Corps is working to remodel childcare center playgrounds across Los Angeles county. Learn about resources available for your playground renovation, and models you can use and visit. We will also be discussing the potential of a collaborative proposal with LACC, joining faith based centers together to seek funding for playground renovations. Plan now to attend.

Are you receiving the LA County **Faith Based Child Care Providers Network News**? If not, call Rev. Kathy Cooper-Ledesma at (323) 256-3162 or email kathy@calchurches.org to be added to this free newsletter. Resources for faith based child care centers, updates on grant opportunities, and profiles of programs for families with children 0-5 are included.

California Council of Churches
2715 K Street,
Suite D
Sacramento, CA
95816

Phone
(916)-442-5447

Fax
(916)-442-3036

Email/Website
cccinfo@calchurches.org
www.calchurches.org

Rick Schlosser
Executive Director

Elizabeth Sholes
Director of
Public Policy

Kathy Cooper-
Ledesma
Regional Director –
Southern California

Joan Schlesing
Child Care Project
Coordinator

Nancy Nielsen
Health Access
Project Coordinator

Laura Herr
Financial
Operations/
Office Manager

Michael Zwahlen
Administrative
Coordinator

Justice Seekers is published by the California Council of Churches for the California faith community. Any part of this publication may be reproduced with credit. For more information or to receive this publication, please contact us. *Justice Seekers* is printed on recycled paper. ♻️

California Interfaith Energy Assistance Project (CIEAP)

In January 2002 the California Council of Churches (CCC), in collaboration with Catholic Charities of California, received a grant of \$750,000 from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to fund the California Interfaith Energy Assistance Project (CIEAP). The project was originally designed to provide one year's funding for seven regional field operations to promote low-income energy assistance programs and environmental stewardship/environmental justice advocacy to the faith community.

CIEAP began operating in March 2002 and, with budget savings, was able to extend its operations through June 2003 in all seven areas. Five areas continued operation through December 2003, and two through February 2004. Some areas have integrated CIEAP

From the Executive Director:

For those of us who believe that our faith commitment requires us to "walk the walk" on many social justice issues facing our state, this is a very busy time! We have 14 ballot propositions on the November ballot, many of them very significant to issues of social and economic justice. Some of the issues are revisions in the "three-strikes" law (Proposition 66); gambling (Props. 68 and 70); stem cell research (Prop. 71), and preserving employer-paid health coverage (Prop. 72). Our recommendations will be sent out following IMPACT's September 20th board meeting.

One of our newest projects, Health Care Access, funded by the California Endowment, will produce a new study guide for congregations on issues around universal access to health care from a faith perspective. We plan on publishing this new study in September, and it would be an excellent opportunity for congregations to undertake before the November elections when Proposition 72 appears on the ballot. If you want to be on the list to receive a copy of the new study as soon as it is off the presses, please e-mail your request to cccinfo@calchurches.org.

More information on all of our projects (including many we do not have room to mention here) can be found on our website at www.calchurches.org. Please also visit

activities into their day-to-day operations and will continue to offer outreach services through other agency programs or working group activities. Additionally, we are happy to report that we have received extension funding from the Hewlett Foundation that will allow us to continue to fund the San Gabriel Region of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles (CCLA) until August 31, 2004 to provide environment health outreach, education and advocacy activities in their San Gabriel Valley Region.

Many of this effort's outreach activities are done as a part of the San Gabriel Valley Health and Faith Collaborative whose partners include CCLA, CCC, Citrus Valley Health Partners, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (SPA 3) and other local religious and non-profit organizations.

California Church IMPACT's (our sister organization) website at www.churchimpact.org.

Transitions:

- Our prayers are with CCC Treasurer Rev. Byron Nelson upon the death of his beloved wife, Virginia.
- CCC's much-loved Statewide Childcare Coordinator, Virginia Greenwald has completed her work on her last "official" project for us and is now really retired (or as retired as we believe Virginia will ever be!) Many, many thanks to Virginia for her years of hard and successful work in so many areas.
- Fresno County Childcare Organizer, Joan Schlesing, has completed her work funded by First Five Fresno County. This summer she is organizing child Summer Nutrition programs in the Selma area. We're looking towards the fall when we plan for Joan to move into the Statewide ChildCare Coordinator role.
- California Interfaith Energy Assistance Project (CIEAP –see article on page 2) Director, Tom Bourne, has moved into the role of Executive Director of California Interfaith Power & Light but is still working out of our offices in Sacramento. We thank Tom for his years of excellent work and leadership on this project.
- Financial Operations/Office Manager Laura Herr will be married in August to Austin Patton. We pray for them a lifetime of love and happiness.

Universal Health Care Continued

Over the past three years in our congregational trainings throughout the state, we examined the principles of health, fairness, equality, quality of life, and commitments to those in need, then linked those principles to legislative policies that reflect our faith traditions and beliefs. Through IMPACT advocacy, we supported several health care bills including SB 2 (Burton-Speier), The Health Insurance Act that passed and was signed into law. SB 2 requires employers with 50-199 employees to provide health insurance to employees and, for those with 200 or more employees, to employees’ families as well. Employers offering private insurance could continue as usual, but all employers may opt instead to pay a fee into a state insurance “pool” that will, with substantial premium savings, purchase insurance from Blue Shield, Kaiser, and other companies. The Health Insurance Act adds 1.2 million more workers to the rolls of the insured, a major step toward universal coverage while preserving employee choice of coverage.

This coming November an initiative, Proposition 72, backed by the Chamber of Commerce, fast food chains, and large retailers, will seek to overturn SB 2. If the initiative succeeds, there will be no guarantees for any employees’ health coverage. We believe that maximizing profits by cutting health care benefits is a false economy and a cruel hardship. We support the position “Yes on Proposition 72” - Yes to save health coverage - as a critical step toward equality in health and massive social savings. Through the complementary relationship between the Council and IMPACT we offer our members a chance to put faith in action.

Groups opposing the Health Insurance Act in a “No on Proposition 72” position say that requiring middle-sized and large businesses to provide health care is a ‘tax’ (it is a fee, not a tax), and that it is a ‘job killer’. SB 2 would raise costs a scant 1-3 percent for some employers and would offer savings to employers through insurance pools that could obtain the very lowest premium rates. The 2003 California Establishment Survey found that only 2 percent of businesses said they would relocate outside California due to SB 2, while most would remain the same or slightly increase prices. By having health care, employees would likely spend their money more widely, thereby increasing economic activity overall.

IMPACT is working with a coalition of faith, consumers, health, seniors, children, labor, and other groups to support “Yes on Proposition 72.” We are seeking committed faith voices, clergy and laity, for volunteer activities.

If you are interested in supporting this initiative and extending the dialogue on health care, please provide your name, address, ZIP, and phone number and indicate what activities you would like to support. Email us at sholes@calchurches.org OR fill out this coupon and FAX or mail to us. We will connect you with others in your area working on this critically important issue. We will also keep you informed of faith work on this measure.

Thank you!

Elizabeth Sholes,
Director of Public Policy

Support Preserving Health Care

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please send your reply to sholes@calchurches.org or fill out the coupon and FAX to (196) 442-3036 or mail to California Church IMPACT, 2715 K Street, Suite D, Sacramento, CA 95816.

Activities toward Preserving Health Care (Yes on Proposition 72)

- Secure endorsements – individual
- Secure endorsements – congregational
- Organize community meetings to discuss health care principles and Proposition 72
- Organize/participate with interfaith breakfast
- Provide bulletin inserts, prepare Op-Ed pieces, write letters to the editor from faith perspectives, make up flyers for distribution
- Work with clergy in your region to do a “Health in the Pulpit” sermon and/or lesson
- Work with coalition groups in your area to offer community-wide education on health care and Proposition 72
- Region you would most like to serve: Northern CA _____ Los Angeles _____ San Diego _____

Visit the California Council of Churches online at <http://www.calchurches.org/>

Activists Needed:

Help Us Make a Difference!

California Church IMPACT has received outstanding support from all of you through the last years. Our visibility at state and federal levels with respect to advocacy has been outstanding. Now we want to make our voices even more effective by recruiting some of you to be Target Activists in Assembly and Senatorial districts throughout the state. This is our "Faith in Action" program of active witness for a Social Gospel.

We would like to begin with an "Adopt a Legislator" strategy wherein you volunteer to be the contact person for working with IMPACT and sometimes in coalitions with our advocacy allies to do a number of things:

- ◆ Become well informed on key issues in health care, welfare, peace and justice, child care and the like;
- ◆ Volunteer to make regular contact with your Assemblymember and/or Senator in your district of residence over these issues. This would include phone, mail, and in-person visits as needed.
- ◆ Help organize other people in your district either from our advocacy lists or in conjunction with people we will supply from groups such as Health Access, Congress of California Seniors, people with disabilities, other faith groups, and labor.
- ◆ Volunteer to do speaker's trainings and attend public meetings or press conferences to witness for the IMPACT position on important legislative and ballot issues.
- ◆ Help organize IMPACT trainings in your area on legislative issues and for the Council of Churches on new congregational study guides.

- ◆ If you are clergy, to become part of a "Clergy on Call" program to have faith leaders present in your area for meetings and public presentations.

These are just some of the items we need leaders to accomplish if we are to have our voice heard and heeded where it is important.

It is not necessary that you be available for all events and all items at all times. We would simply like to be able to contact you regularly to do what you can when you can. We would also like to encourage you to find other people of like mind and faith principles to whom you can refer us should you not be available.

If you are interested, please contact us at activist@churchimpact.org. Please include your name, address with ZIP code, phone, and email address. If you know your Senate and Assembly districts (or the incumbents' names) please add those so we don't have to look them up! If you aren't sure, we will find them for you.

We know from experience that having committed people who want to organize around key issues is critical to our success. We know you all are up to the task, and we welcome all of you who wish to participate in this new step forward in our effectiveness.

Thanks to you all.

Elizabeth Sholes,
Director of Public Policy

To: **Inside:** pg. 1 - Health Care Action Alert
pg. 1 - LA Child Care Workshop &
Newsletter

July 2004 (Volume 7, Number 3)

California Council of Churches
2715 K Street, Suite D, Sacramento, CA 95816



Non-profit Organization
US Postage Paid
Sacramento, CA
Permit # 59