

**Background Briefing Materials for  
2007 Legislative Agenda Item:  
COST- EFFECTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE**

***\*\*NOTE: Although many Leagues have an interest in single payer legislation, after discussions with both legislators and health care advocates, a single payer system remains a long-term goal. Local leagues should be encouraged to continue a public education dialogue within their communities on this issue.\*\****

This year local Leagues emphasized their desire to make health care in New York State a priority issue. The League of Women Voters of New York State supports health care legislation which meets the following criteria:

- ◆ Assures a basic level of quality physical and mental health care for all state residents.
- ◆ Provides planning, and regulations to assure New Yorkers, including the medically indigent, access to a basic level of quality care
- ◆ Provides a single-payer system as an acceptable way to contain cost and provide equitable access.
- ◆ Contains costs without compromising accessibility or quality care
- ◆ Devotes more resources to help promotion and disease prevention.

The League believes that New York State has a proper role in the regulation of health care and must assure high quality care that is affordable and accessible to all. Historically, since 1965, New York State through Medicaid began its most formal role in providing public health care for individuals and families with low income and resources. In 2000, with the passage of the Health Care Reform Act (HCRA), New York State substantially increased its role in public health care by subsidizing programs for the underinsured through such programs as Family Health Plus, Child Health Plus, and Medicaid. Since 2000, HCRA has been renewed in 2003 and 2005 and will be up for renewal in June 2007.

Legislative action in 2007 will start with budget priorities by the new Governor, Eliot Spitzer. The Governor has signaled that he will use his budget to ensure that New York's five hundred thousand uninsured children are guaranteed access to health insurance. He has also pledged to use a new streamlined enrollment process that guards against fraud, and will enroll nine hundred thousand uninsured Medicaid-eligible adults. We applaud the Governor and will support those efforts.

For the 2007 Legislative Session, the LWNYS has identified two pieces of legislation that the League believes will continue to move New York State along the continuum toward assuring a basic level of quality physical and mental health care for all state residents while also meeting

League criteria for effective health care legislation. The League will support and lobby the following healthcare legislation:

**EMPLOYER/PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP BILL:**

“An act to amend the public health law, the social services law and the state finance law, in relation to employer partnerships for child health plus, Medicaid and family health plus; and to repeal certain provisions of the social services law relating thereto.”

This bill provides the opportunity for low-income workers who work for employers who offer health coverage, but who cannot afford to pay the worker’s share of the premium to participate in employment-based health coverage through premium assistance and employer buy-in programs.

Through the premium assistance program, the State would only have to pay the low-income workers’ share of the premium of the employer’s private health insurance and not the full cost of public health insurance making good use of public dollars. Wrap-around coverage will be provided through Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus, and Medicaid for services not covered by the employer’s insurance plan.

Through the employer buy-in program, employers pay the State for public health insurance coverage for qualified low-income employees and dependents; with the employer’s cost equal to the amount the employer would have paid for the cost of the company’s health benefit plan. State dollars are being well spent in this program as well because the State only pays part of the cost of the public health insurance coverage while the employer pays the remainder.

This legislation will also amend the Social Services Law, thereby eliminating much of the red tape for individuals receiving Medicaid under premium assistance or employer buy-in because the local social services district would be able to verify with the employer that the employee actually exists and earns a certain salary. The coverage received through the employer/public partnerships would be the same scope as an individual who receives public health coverage the traditional way. The Employer/Public Partnership Bill meets the League’s criteria toward supporting legislation that provides more New Yorkers access to a basic level of quality care.

**BILL S.00316 GOLDEN**

**ASSEMBLY SPONSOR GOTTFRIED—AWAITING NEW ASSEMBLY #  
PRESCRIPTION DRUG ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:**

This legislation provides increased access and affordability to prescription drugs by organizing the collective market power of New York’s prescription drug consumers to negotiate rebates with suppliers. This program could help create downward pressure on prescription drug prices generally, saving money in the state health plans and the Medicaid program.

The program derives state revenue from rebates and applies that revenue to reducing costs for participants. The bill also sets up a prescription drug assistance board that negotiates agreements

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with suppliers in which the suppliers pay rebates to the fiscal administrator of a program for prescription drugs purchased by participants in the program. An advisory committee, appointed to five-year terms by the governor, provides advice and consultation to the board on the development and management of the program. As such, Prescription Drug

Assistance Program meets the League's criteria of containing costs without compromising accessibility or quality care.

**2007 LWVNYS LOBBY REPORT FORM**  
**COST-EFFECTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE**

Please complete and return to the LWVNYS office in Albany by **APRIL 20, 2006**. If possible, please submit electronically by downloading this form from the state web site ([www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)) or calling Stephanie at the state office (518-465-4162) to have a form e-mailed to you. A copy should also be kept in your League files.

Name of Legislator: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please circle one) Senator                      Assemblyperson

District # \_\_\_\_\_ Date of visit \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

Representing the LWV of \_\_\_\_\_

If you met with staff, please list name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

*Please record information that will provide an accurate picture of the legislator's position on any of the following discussed during your visit. Please indicate the legislator's general agreement or disagreement with League position. Also, please indicate if the legislator felt strongly about any other issue covering League positions.*

**TO YOUR SENATOR:**

**WOULD YOU SUPPORT A PRESCRIPTION DRUG ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ALSO KNOWN AS A PRESCRIPTION DRUG BULK BUYING?**

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