

August 18th Public Meeting

Report by lead organizer, Kathleen Myers:

The August meeting merged with a public meeting at the Labor Temple on August 18 that PNHPWW helped to organize. The subject was **Save Our Life Line - Medicare, Medicaid & Social Security**. It was a rousing response to the threats of proposed cutbacks to our safety net social programs.

City Councilmember Nick Licata introduced brief comments by eleven speakers from community, senior, healthcare and labor groups, intermittently fielding comments and questions from the house. There was standing room only and a crowd of over one hundred.

Right away, it was established by David McLanahan and union representatives Steve Kofahl and Mike Andrew that we have the money to pay for income and health security and we are going to have to organize against the rich and powerful who don't want to spend the federal budget in that way. David M pointed out that in every other country with a national health plan, labor has led the way.

Individual communities particularly affected came next. African-American labor and faith activist Verlene Jones said these programs are a return on our investment. If we want to make meaningful change, she said, we need to make law via petitions and signatures. Mike Andrew of Pride at Work enumerated the challenges of the LGBT community and Cara Bilodeau of Planned Parenthood spoke for women, who are 70% of the Medicaid population over the age of 15. Joe Martin, co-founder of Pike Market Medical Clinic, advised us to always boost confidence in speaking with our base as we are in the majority and it is easy for many social program recipients to become dispirited.

Working together on the real solution to out-of-reach health care costs, we can use the budget crisis as an opportunity to enact single payer, began PNHPWW board member Mindy Blaski. Paul Bigman, who is on the steering committee of the Labor Campaign for Single Payer, emphasized that this is a labor issue, that health care is the number one topic of contract negotiations, that single payer can make US business competitive at the same time as it is a jobs program. "It terrifies them to see us together. When longshoremen are up sitting in trees and environmentalists are out on the picket line, the world will be ours." David Loud, liason to Congressman McDermott, suggested that 6 yrs ago in the very

same hall began the successful national campaign to beat back the threat at that time to social security. Attendees also advocated taking the room to the streets, taking over every precinct to affect primary ballots, and joining the train to DC for the October 6 Freedom Square occupation to stop the wars october2011.org

Before the Next Steps section of the evening, HCFA-WA board member Martha Koester argued for seizing this immediate threat as an organizing tool and offered the means to fax and phone members of the Super Committee.

Wrapping up were suggestions: tell Patty Murray who is the co-chair of the Super Committee "No Cuts, Tax the Rich, Stop the Wars." Come together on what we can stand on. Bring pressure to bear - getting social security and civil rights took a mass movement of labor and others.

As a beginning toward specific action, sign-ups were gathered for promoting McDermott/Sanders single payer bills HR 1200 and S 915, working for clean campaigns, faxing the Super Committee, and taking the train to the October 6 encampment.

Local inspirations Jim Page and Joe Martin began and ended the evening with songs such as "Over My Dead Body" and "I Want a New America."

Thanks to videographer Rick Skillman, you can now visit the August 18 meeting on Youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ta9PUbtK4bo&feature=related>

and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THealhZf7uc>