

HEALTH

- POLICY STATEMENT -

The New York State Grange is taking an active role to raise public awareness of problems in the health care field, especially the unique needs of the rural community. We, as an organization, should actively work with other rural agencies and organizations to make everyone aware of these problems and work to help find possible solutions.

Ever-rising health care costs mean that more people are unable to afford adequate health care for themselves and their families. Experience has shown that most government-sponsored and administered programs have not been effective.

The Grange will continue to work for a compromise on health care reform issues, one that will encourage the continuation of our freedom of choice of doctors and the facilities we wish to use. We also need to be a strong advocate for rural areas so that their special needs are not neglected by those who shape our policies.

We must continue to be an active participant in all health care reform debates. Areas which continue to need our attention are the cost of prescription medications and rising availability of counterfeit medications, long-term care and catastrophic illness insurance coverage, the protection of personal assets and financial savings to pay for long-term care and Medicare reforms.

Medicaid is another government program which consumes a large share of taxpayer money. An effort must be made to contain the cost of the Medicaid program. Emphasis should be placed on preventive or “well-care” services rather than illness or “need-care” services. More emphasis needs to be placed on the review of unnecessary, experimental or high-risk treatments unless medically documented as lifesaving. This will help to control the ever-increasing costs of this program.

Currently, one of the most controversial issues facing us as an organization and as a nation is that of abortion. The Grange believes that this is a personal decision for individuals and should remain as such. We oppose government’s financing of abortion except in cases of rape, incest, endangered health of the mother or serious defects of the child. We support education efforts which would emphasize the need of licensed hospitals and medical doctors when abortions are necessary. We support legislation that would ban partial birth abortions. We also urge regulations that require all abortion agencies provide counseling by qualified personnel to explore all possible options before an abortion and we support legislation that would require parental notification in cases involving minor dependent children less than 18 years of age.

October 2009

CHILD CARE

INFANT HEARING TESTING

We support legislation that would encourage the testing for hearing impairments in children from birth up to and including age three. (2009)

DRUG TESTING

PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUG TESTING FOR PARTICIPANTS IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

We support legislation that would allow testing of students for performance enhancing drugs who are participating in school activities to detect illegal use, if there is reasonable suspicion. (2009)

DRUG TESTING AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY

We support legislation that persons receiving public assistance, prior to and randomly thereafter, be tested for drug use. (2007)

ELDER CARE

SILVER ALERT SYSTEM

We support legislation that would develop a Silver Alert System for people dealing with any form of dementia. (2009)

EMERGENCY CARE/VOLUNTEERS

ENHANCED 911 FOR CELL PHONES

We support expediting the process of the Enhanced 911 locating system for calls made from cell phones. (2008)

LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEER INCENTIVE ACT

We support the Emergency Services Volunteer Incentive Act which would help local communities reverse the decline in the number of volunteers of firefighter and emergency services personnel. (2005)

FUNDING FOR MEDICAL HELICOPTERS

We support legislation that would provide annual funding for helicopter services as a part of New York State Rural Health Services. (2005)

FOOD/NUTRITION

FOOD SAFETY

We favor legislation that would establish one agency to oversee the American food supply, and that this agency should be provided with the resources needed to do its job. (2008)

CAFFEINE LABELING

We urge passage of legislation requiring all food and beverage processors to list on the standardized nutrition label the amount of caffeine in their products. (2008)

POULTRY AND FOOD PROCESSING OUT-OF-COUNTRY

We oppose any plan to ship poultry or any other food for processing to another country, when we have companies who can do the processing here under stricter health regulations. (2006)

FUNDING

EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR UPSTATE HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES

We support legislation which would reform the formulas for distribution of state health funding to hospitals and nursing homes making them equivalent to the current population percentage that lives in the upstate counties. (2008)

HEALTH CARE WORKERS/ PRACTITIONERS

SHORTAGE OF RURAL PHYSICIANS

We support legislation that would establish incentives, such as loan forgiveness that would encourage doctors/physicians and other health care professionals to establish practices in rural areas. (2008)

NURSE SHORTAGE

We support legislation that would establish a nursing recruitment incentive and retention program in New York State and provide student loan reimbursements or a forgiveness program that would provide financial support to applicants entering or continuing in registered nurse educational programs who agree to engage in employment as nurses in hospitals, nursing homes and hospice centers, and that such legislation would obligate those receiving loans or forgiveness to complete one year of service in New York State for each year assistance is received. (2008)

THE NURSING SHORTAGE CORRECTION ACT

We urge the New York State Legislature to reconsider the Nursing Shortage Correction Act as the shortage of nursing programs has become very acute in New York State. (2008)

RE-EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND CHECKS

We approve a directory for background checks of health care workers and that the information be made available to all healthcare facilities and in-home healthcare agencies. (2007)

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We support legislative action that sets up a cross reference file between all counties and all states, making criminal background information accessible over a larger area which would allow a more accurate background check. (2006)

NEW YORK STATE LICENSED ACUPUNCTURISTS

We support insurance parity for licensed Acupuncturists. (2005)

HOSPITALS/NURSING HOMES

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

We oppose the closing of Children's Hospital at 219 Bryant Street in Buffalo, New York. (2007)

CLOSURE OF UPSTATE HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES

We oppose the closure of health care facilities in rural counties where another facility of the same services in the same geographic area of twenty miles has already closed since 2003 or further, that when a recommended facility for closure would cause that area's residents to travel more than twenty miles for the service, that it be spared from closure. (2006)

INSURANCE/HMO's

HEALTH INSURANCE TAX CREDITS

We support proposed legislation that would provide a tax credit to qualified small employers, including farmers, when they purchase health insurance for their employees. (2008)

HEARING AID, EYEGLASSES AND PROSTHETIC DEVICES

We favor revision of the New York State Insurance Laws to allow replacement of hearing aid, eyeglasses, and prosthetic devices without regard to depreciation scale, and that replacement of the hearing aids, eyeglasses, and prosthetic devices be made as soon as possible after a claim is made and prior to a formal settlement. (2006)

MANDATORY HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

We oppose any regulatory requirements that would make health insurance coverage mandatory for all businesses in New York State. (2006)

PRESERVE LOCAL CONTROL OVER ACTIVE AND RETIREE INSURANCE BENEFITS

We oppose any State mandated restriction which would affect a local government's control over the provision of health care benefits to its active or retired officers and employees. (2006)

PATIENT'S BILL OF RIGHTS LEGISLATION

We support legislation regarding a Patients Bill of Rights which grants subscribers of HMO plans more avenues to challenge the decisions of their HMO when care is denied for a life threatening illness. (2006)

HEALTH INSURANCE

We support legislation advocating lower premiums for supplemental health insurance. (2005)

PRE-TAX HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS

We support legislation that reduces taxes on federal annuitants, members and retirees of the uniform services and legislative branch employees. (2005)

MALPRACTICE

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE FOR MILITARY DOCTORS

We urge legislators to override the 1950 Supreme Court ruling that prevents medical malpractice suits against military doctors with the exception of combat situations. (2009)

MALPRACTICE SUITS

We support the use of an experience rating system for determining rates for Medical Malpractice Insurance premiums. (2008)

MEDICARE/MEDICAID/ HEALTH CARE COSTS

MEDICAID COVERAGE OUT-OF-STATE

We support change in Medicaid regulations that would charge the home state of the legal residence of a person on Medicaid when he/she needs emergency medical attention in a state he/she is visiting. (2009)

IMMUNOSUPPRESSIVE MEDICATION

We support legislation that would eliminate the 36-month time limit for Medicare coverage for immunosuppressive medications for transplant recipients. (2009)

SERVICE CONNECTED COMPENSATION FOR TINNITUS

We support legislation that would allow for a separate 10% disability rating for each ear in veterans experiencing tinnitus in each ear. (2007)

EYEWEAR IN MEDICARE

We recommend eyewear be included in the Medicare coverage as needed. (2007)

HEARING AID COVERAGE

We support legislation which calls for a change in Medicare coverage to include hearing aids. (2007)

MEDICARE PART D

We urge that the open enrollment in Medicare Part D be extended and penalties be waived and lower drug prices be negotiated, and that the Part D benefit be provided through and administered by the traditional Medicare program, just as Medicare Part A and Part B are administered. (2006)

FRAUDULENT PRACTICES

We urge State and Federal agencies to be more aggressive in their investigation of fraud, waste and abuse within the Medicare and Medicaid systems. (2007)

We support legislation to curtail fraud in the health care industry. (2005)

MEDICAID COSTS

We support legislation to limit the growth of all Medicaid costs. (2005)

HEALTH CARE COSTS

We support legislation that curbs spiraling health care costs. (2005)

PRESCRIPTIONS/MEDICATIONS

MEDICATION IDENTIFICATION

We support the regulation of the packaging of prescription medications, so different strengths of the same type of medicine are recognizably different from each other. (2008)

COUNTERFEIT MEDICATIONS

We support legislation to encourage the efforts of the pharmaceutical companies to establish and maintain a tracking system for all prescription medications. (2007)

STUDENT MEDICATION

We favor legislation making it possible for a student to carry their own life-saving medication (Epinephrine-Epi Pen) so that the student could administer the medication or have it administered by trained personnel. (2006)

MEDICATIONS CONTAINING MERCURY

We urge the discontinued use of the element mercury in childhood vaccines until more positive research is done to prove its effect. (2006)

FOREIGN COUNTRY PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

We urge the Congress of the United States to change the law allowing citizens to import prescription drugs from Canada. (2006)

LOWER DRUG COST

We favor legislation that would reduce the cost of drugs that would help make lifesaving and quality-of-life drugs more affordable to Medicare beneficiaries as well as the general population by requiring laws that would increase competition in the drug industry and that drugs researched and developed with taxpayer funds be more favorably priced. (2006)

We support legislation that would allow the purchase of medications from Canada, and we further support continued legislative efforts to control medication prices in the United States with price bargaining between the Federal Government and pharmaceutical companies. (2005)

HANDWRITTEN PRESCRIPTIONS AND MEDICAL ORDERS

We encourage the use of computer generated or typewritten prescriptions, and other medical orders whenever possible. (2006)

PUBLIC SAFETY

PUBLIC WATER ON COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

We support the State granting financial assistance to aid the county fairs in assuring that water for human consumption meet standards of connections with public water or chlorinating systems if New York State and/or the county health department requires it. (2009)

PLASTIC IDENTIFICATION

We support legislation that would ban the use of Bisphenol A (BPA) in all plastics and would require manufacturers to code their products and label products BPA free, if appropriate, and that more effort needs to be made to educate the consumer on the risk factors of BPA and the code number system on plastic containers. (2008)

WEST NILE VIRUS

We encourage the New York State Health Department to adopt education and research on West Nile Virus that would parallel the continued effort on Lyme disease. (2006)

We urge the New York State Department of Health to redirect their research to include the possible effects on the environment and humans when using the spraying of pesticides as a way to control the mosquitoes and the spread of the West Nile Virus. (2005)

REFORM

HEALTH CARE REFORM

We urge that any health care reform legislation includes measures that will address the special needs of rural areas, such as the shortage of doctors, adequate health care facilities and meaningful changes to make prescription drugs affordable for those who need the medications. (2009)

RESEARCH/PROGRAMS

HUMAN CLONING

We oppose human cloning. (2006)

TOBACCO

LEGAL AGE FOR PURCHASE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS

We oppose any legislation to raise the legal age of purchasing tobacco products in New York State from the current age of 18. (2008)

TREATMENT

TREATMENT OF GAMBLING PROBLEMS

We support legislation authorizing the use of a portion of all gambling generated revenues to fund expanded programs for the prevention, education and treatment of gambling problems. (2007)

VETERANS

FAMILY HEALTH INSURANCE

We support legislation that would change the laws for health coverage for veterans with service connected disabilities and their families, to include their spouse and children. (2009)