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Governor Vetoes Universal Health Care

Proponents pledge to reintroduce legislation next year

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Sacramento – Senate Bill 840 (Kuehl), the California Universal Health Care Act, was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger yesterday, bringing to a close six years of Kuehl’s authorship of the historic legislation, but not the end of future attempts.

SB 840’s passage by the California legislature in 2006 marked the first time in US history that a single payer universal health care plan was passed in a state legislature and brought to a Governor’s desk. Kuehl credited the bill’s success to its wide-spread network of active supporters and to the continued deterioration of California’s fragmented health insurance system.

“Californians want the security of universal health care. They want to stop the unchecked growth of premiums and the steady decline in benefits and quality of care.” said Senator Kuehl. “That can only happen if we find the courage to stand up to the insurance companies. The legislature delivered a thoughtful, affordable and comprehensive plan. Unfortunately the Governor is either afraid of, or unwilling to, face the health insurance industry. But,” she added, using one of the Governor’s favorite lines, “We’ll be back. This bill will be introduced again and continue to gain support next year.”

Proponents responded to the Governor’s veto by immediately announcing that the legislation will be introduced next year by Assemblymember Mark Leno, who is expected to be elected to the State Senate this November.

“The Governor lost yet another golden opportunity to bring relief and justice to millions of uninsured, working families and employers struggling with rising health care costs in our state,” stated Assemblymember Leno. “I applaud Senator Kuehl, the One Care Now Campaign and all of the state wide organizations and advocates for their tireless fight for affordable, accessible health care for all Californians. The stakes are too high for us to be deterred, and that is why I am proud to have been asked to continue this critical fight next year in the legislature. We will bring this issue back again and again until everyone in California has access to high quality health care that puts people before insurance company profits.”

“I am thrilled that Assemblymember Leno is going to continue the push for universal health care in California,” stated Senator Kuehl. “Getting universal health care is not a question of “if”, it’s only a matter of “when”, and Assemblymember Leno’s leadership is a huge boost for the movement.”

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