



January 15, 2010

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF NURSES AND OREGON NURSES ASSOCIATION
APPLAUD AGREEMENT TO EXEMPT UNION HEALTH PLANS FROM TAX ON
WORKER'S HEALTHCARE BENEFITS**

The National Federation of Nurses, a national labor organization of which the Oregon Nurses Association is a member, strongly supports the tentative agreement between the Obama Administration and labor leaders that will temporarily exempt union health plans from a tax on employer-sponsored health insurance policies.

As this agreement and the healthcare bill are finalized, the National Federation of Nurses demands that nurses' health plans be included in the tax exemption and that their unique perspectives—as daily caregivers and as covered employees—be considered in the national dialogue on healthcare reform.

“Nurses have historically sacrificed pay increases and other benefits in favor of better health coverage,” said Barbara Crane, RN, president of the National Federation of Nurses, a leading national labor union representing 70,000 nurses nationwide. “Maintaining those benefits for these men and women who work in one of the highest-injury professions, and who provide vital care to all Americans, is critical.”

The tentative agreement came after negotiations between the Obama Administration and national labor unions that opposed the tax proposal in the Senate healthcare bill. The Senate proposal was for a 40 percent tax on the parts of individual insurance policies that are above annual premiums of \$8,500 and family policies of \$23,000. Far from impacting only wealthy Americans with high-priced insurance policies, the tax would affect middle-class workers, union employees and people in high-risk jobs.

The National Federation of Nurses and other opponents believe the tax would encourage employers to scale back coverage and institute higher co-pays and deductibles that put the burden of the tax directly on workers. This, in turn, would lead to patients not getting the healthcare they need and deserve—and to union workers losing hard-won benefits.

Under the agreement reached this week, health plans negotiated under collective-bargaining agreements would be exempt for two years after the 2013 effective date, giving labor leaders time to negotiate new contracts.

For more information about the National Federation of Nurses and the proposed tax, visit www.nfn.org. Members of the Oregon Press can contact Scott Palmer at 503 293 0011 (ext 308) or palmer@oregonrn.org for comment.

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