

### Health care measure must protect retirees

Wednesday, January 20, 2010

On Christmas Eve, the U.S. Senate slid through its own version of the health care reform bill. The bill fails to protect the earned post-retirement health care benefits of tens of millions of American retirees like me. Unjustly, this legislation goes a step further in the wrong direction by actually financially penalizing corporations that do the right thing by continuing to provide retiree prescription drug benefits they promised to their former workers.

The process of melding this bill with the House bill is being done behind closed doors instead of going through the normal conference process, which means retirees will again get left behind. This appears to be an effort to pass health care reform regardless of its impacts on the public.

Aren't my lifelong dedication and the wages I contributed over many decades in exchange for retirement health care coverage worth protecting?

The anti-retiree and anti-baby boomer legislation that passed the Senate just as Santa mounted his sled was nothing more than a lump of coal in the stockings of millions of older Americans. It encourages, and in some cases will force, corporations to reduce benefits. Ironically, those of us who have already earned health benefits by making sacrifices during our working years now have to fight our own elected officials.

None of us is asking for a handout, just a guarantee that any new federal health care reform bill treat us fairly and not cancel the benefits we earned over a lifetime.

With both houses of Congress currently working toward combining their individual health care reform bills, now is the time to act for the protection of earned retiree health care benefits.

Thomas Brophy

Totowa