



SENTINEL

Advocate

The Official Newsletter for the
STATE EMPLOYED PHYSICIANS
 Division of the Federation of Physicians & Dentists / AHPE

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 FPD Director

along with,

**LOCAL NEWS,
 UPDATES & ALERTS**

plus,

**What the New Health
 Care Law Means for
 You & Your Family**

**And be sure to check out the
 Member Benefit Center
 And put your membership
 dues to work everyday!**

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Time to Get Involved

Message from the Director, Jack Seddon

Another year and the Legislature is still crying poverty. What they really mean is that they are looking to once again "trim the fat" - or should I say "trim the workforce."

As it battles a continuing budget crisis, the state of Florida and its cities have found it necessary to once again shed thousands of employees, using early retirement, layoffs and other strategies to trim the workforce.

Well, if you don't like what's happening in your city, now is the time to get involved and do something about it. You may think it's not worth the aggravation, what with all the controversy, negative campaigns ads, and the notion that there's too big of a gap between what gets promised and what actually gets done.

But with primary seasons as long as Florida's (the deadline for filing for the primary is just under 4 months out from the election), there's no time like now to start writing and visiting your state legislative delegations to tell them "you're mad as hell and you're not going to take it anymore!"

With so little time between primaries and the election, candidates won't have much time to recover from their long campaigns and may continue with fists flying. So you need to be the ones to remind them of what their loyalties should be.

Even though it's a non-presidential election, you still need to be taking advantage of one of your greatest freedoms. Stay a part of the process, use your voice and steer the direction of your future.

Bargaining Continued for a First Contract at Palmer

FLORIDA - Bargaining for a first contract at *Palmer College of Chiropractic* in Port Orange, FL continued July 13 through July 16 and at times became somewhat contentious. However, the issues at this point have been narrowed down to the percentage of across-the-board increases and two other economic issues, along with some contract language.

The Parties left negotiations with the understanding that College counsel would seek greater discretion for settlement purposes from College officials at the Davenport home campus. College counsel will be contacting the Federation to schedule what will hopefully be the final round of bargaining.

In the interim, the Federation has had a series of meetings with its members as well as representatives of a number of local labor unions in order to update them on the progress of negotiations. Local labor leaders are prepared to support any Palmer member initiatives in order to secure their first contract.

Be sure to stay tuned to the FPD public-sector pages of our web site at **FPD1199.org** for any subsequent updates.

Successor Agreement Sought with South Florida State Hospital-GEO, Inc.

FLORIDA - The Federation will be commencing face-to-face negotiations with GEO, Inc. In the very near future for a successor agreement. The Federation has forwarded a series of proposals to the Company for its consideration. Obviously, the Company is already crying poverty, even in spite of the fact that the Legislature awarded them a new fat-cat contract.

Be sure to stay tuned to the FPD *Public-Sector Division* pages of our web site at **FPD1199.org** for any subsequent updates.

MEMBER BENEFIT CENTER (*more on back page*)

Too Busy to Shop for Affordable Health Care? Let Us Do It For You!



We understand how confusing it can be to find a health insurance plan that meets your own particular needs and budget. There are many companies out there selling many types of health insurance plans and picking the right one is tough. Let us do the legwork for you!

**Let us introduce you to the
Danton & Dees Insurance Group,
your union-approved resource for
Individual, Family, and Small & Large Group
Health Insurance**

Their service is FREE and as a union member you'll always get their expert advice & help through every step of the way.

For questions or additional information, please contact our agent today!

Or go to the FPD home web site **fpdunion.org**, click on "*Member Benefits*" in the sidebar, and scroll down to see where you can fill out a short online quote form.

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Splash into Savings!

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Thanks to the collective buying power of millions of union members, **Union Plus** is able to offer valuable, discounted products and services exclusively for working families.

Find out how you can start saving by visiting **www.unionplus.org** today!



Planning a summer vacation?

Be sure to first visit the
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Union Plus Scholarship

Since 1992, the *Union Plus Scholarship Program* has awarded more than \$3 million to student of working families who want to begin or continue their post-secondary education.

To learn more, visit the "*Member Benefits*" section of our web site at **fpdunion.org**.

You Can Breathe A Little Easier - “Doc Fix” Legislation Passed, You Get A Little Raise & You Can Waive Extra Medicare Coinsurance Amount (although you may not want to)

WASHINGTON - The new “Doc Fix” legislation was signed late June, giving doctors another temporary reprieve of the 21.3% cuts to Medicare rates, which is now set for December 1. At the same time, doctors get a small “raise” of 2.2% for the next 6 months and they can waive the extra “doc fix” Medicare coinsurance amount, if they want to.

Since the raise in Medicare rates causes the coinsurance amount of patients to increase, the *Office of Inspector General* (OIG) issued a directive that allows doctors to legally waive the extra amount instead of going through the hassle of collecting it. Typically, under regular Medicare, patients have a 20% coinsurance (or, 20% of the Medicare allowable amount) which doctors are obligated to collect. If they don’t, they risk violation of federal fraud and abuse laws. But since the 2.2% raise to the Medicare rates is retroactive to June 1, it could be complicated to collect the increased coinsurance amounts from the Medicare patients they had seen for the past month. So, the OIG has simplified the subject for physicians.

Of course this green light to waive the extra coinsurance amounts is NOT a requirement. Indeed, for office visits it may not be worth the hassle of collecting this additional money. But for physicians who have performed surgical procedures last month, where Medicare fees are in the thousands, it certainly would be worth going after the extra money.

One more thing to be aware of is that CMS was forced to start processing claims that had been suspended under a claims-holding period, but which had expired because of Congress’ procrastination on the “doc fix” legislation. Yet, CMS has promised that its carriers would automatically reprocess any June claims paid at the lower rates to reflect the higher rates. SO start your reprocessing today!

Organized medicine, including the Federation, has long expressed outrage over this potentially devastating reimbursement reduction, and continues efforts to put an end to these temporary, “band-aid” fixes that only increase the size of the cuts and the cost of reform. Everyone knows the problem is with the flawed formula in the Medicare payment methodology that causes the annual payment cut and everyone knows that short-term fixes just cannot fixed the long-term problem. So Congress needs to find a permanent solution once and for all.

Stay tuned to **FPD1199.org** for the latest updates on this issue.

A Physician Whistleblower Alleging Anti-Kickback & False Claims Act Violations Gets \$23.5 Million in Government Settlement with Hospital

OHIO - The recently enacted *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* (PPACA) further expands the provisions of the *False Claims Act* (FCA). That, along with the recent \$108 million government settlement with the *Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati* (HAGC), a Cincinnati-based owner and operator of hospitals, and one of its former member hospitals, the *Christ Hospital* (TCH), is sure to increase the federal government’s capability and commitment to enforcement as it relates to health care fraud.

The FCA’s *qui tam* provisions allow private parties to file whistleblower lawsuits on behalf of the United States and to share in any recovery, which can often be substantial. In this case, Dr. Harry Fry, a cardiologist and former employee at TCH filed the lawsuit against HAGC and TCH and he will receive \$23.5 million from the settlement.

TCH continues to deny the government’s (and Dr. Fry’s) allegations, but decided to enter into the settlement in order to avoid the risk of the billion dollar award originally sought by the government.

WHAT HEALTH CARE REFORM MEANS FOR YOU

So you’re confused about what the new health care law will actually mean for you. Don’t feel like reading the more than 2000-page bill yourself? Not sure what’s fact and what’s a down right lie?

We’ll help you sort it all out.

In short, the new law puts us on a path to provide health care coverage for all Americans, empowers consumers over insurance companies and ensures we are moving to reduce health care costs in the long run. Now that the bill has passed the reconciliation process and will now be law, sweeping new policies will be ushered in. Many outlets are trying to tease out what this will mean for the average consumer. We’ve put together some information that will help you to understand it all. We will continue to sift through the many resources that have been providing information about this historic reform so you don’t have to.

Look for the link to your Division’s *Consumer Guide to New Health Care Law* by going to www.FPD1199.org and click on “New & Updates,” and then scroll down to the bottom.



Retirement Planning Center

If you're a PMSA dues-paying member/retiree, not only do you have a whole host of money-saving member benefits available to you, you also have access to valuable educational tools that can help plan your life. One such planning tool is the *Union Plus Retirement Planning Site*. **UnionPlusRetirement.org** was created to help working families and individuals learn more about how to begin to prepare for retirement using practical information, tools and links.

So visit **UnionPlusRetirement.org** today and learn how to set your retirement goals, support yourself and your family financially during retirement, make your money last through retirement and protect your family.

DID YOU KNOW - One in Four Workers Won't Retire On Time. Will You?

For the second straight year, 25% of workers say they expect to retire later than they'd planned. Among the reasons given by those responding to the *2010 Retirement Confidence Survey* conducted by the Employee Benefit Research Institute:

29 % say, "the poor economy"

22% say, "change in employment situation"

16% say, "they can't afford to retire"

Are you on track for a comfortable retirement? Find out by completing the Union Plus interactive *Retirement Roadmap* at **UnionPlusRetirement.org** today!

Don't Let Scammers Scare You About ObamaCare

Scam #1: Con artists show up at the door claiming the new health care law requires everyone to have insurance (which they happen to sell) or go to jail. DON'T be taken in! Health insurance isn't required until 2014, and you CAN'T be arrested for not having it.

Scam #2: Scammers on the phone say seniors need to provide personal identification (Medicare, Social Security, or bank account numbers) to get a \$250 "donut hole" rebate check. Just hang up! If you qualify for the check, it will be mailed to you automatically.

For more information on how ObamaCare may affect you, visit **UnionPlusRetirement.org** today!

Income Protection Has Arrived

with our new *Short & Long Term Disability Benefits Programs!*
Available NOW for members only

Have you ever stopped to think what would happen if your income stopped should you suffer a disability?



Expenses would continue ... probably greater than ever when you consider insurance deductibles and uncovered medical bills. Your income is your most valuable asset and without it your savings can quickly be turned into debt!

You insure your other valuable assets, like your home and your car. But you may not have thought to insure your income in the event you suffer a disability that prevents you from working - which is much more common than you think.

We want our members to be protected! *Disability Income Insurance Protection* plans are now available! These products are specifically designed to replace lost income due to a covered accident or illness, and both *Short Term* and *Long Term* disability products are available.

For more info, call our agent today! **Mary Remson / Danton & Dees Insurance Group / 1-888-788-4563**

Or go to **www.fpdunion.org**, click on "Member Benefits" in the sidebar, and scroll down to see where you can fill out a short online quote form.

MAKE YOUR VIEWS COUNT

Join our campaign to build a stronger union because

TOGETHER WE'RE STRONGER!

Find out how by visiting our web site at www.fpdunion.org or go directly to your Division pages at www.FPD1199.org

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