The Public i, a project of the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, is an independent, collectively-run, community-oriented publication that provides a forum for topics underrepresented and voices underrepresented in the dominant media. All contributors to the paper are volunteers. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to submit articles or story ideas to the editorial collective. We prefer, but do not necessarily restrict ourselves to, articles on issues of local impact written by authors with local ties.

The opinions are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the IMC as a whole.

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JUNE/JULY 2007
V7 #5
The Dog Days of Summer are Here

Students staging a ‘die-in’ against the Iraq War in the intersection of Green and Wright Streets in Campustown.

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Pick a tax, and you pick who pays directly and also who pays indirectly when the cost of the tax is passed along to others in the current of buying and selling. Pick a program on which to spend tax revenues, and it’s the same: you pick who benefits directly, and also who benefits indirectly when earnings or savings are passed along to others in that same current.

So, what is Governor Blagojevich proposing to do, trying to fund universal health insurance in Illinois with a Gross Receipts Tax? Universal state-funded health insurance? The sort of a night-wing Serbian military officer who long ago found it best to leave Tito’s Yugoslavia—has he suddenly turned socialist? And what about Senator Emil Jones, who appears to come in equal parts from Commonwealth Edison and Chicago’s south side? What is a Gross Receipts Tax? All this is high drama, but nobody seems to realize it quite.

I’ll leave it to others to discuss the health insurance side of the story, exciting as it is, and focus here on the Gross Receipts Tax, the GRT.

WHAT IS A GROSS RECEIPTS TAX?

It is a straight percentage levy on everything that comes into the cash register. The Governor’s office came up with several different proposed versions, but the proportion typically varies between one and two percent of receipts, depending on the type and size of the business taxed. However, small businesses are completely exempted. Depending on which proposed version you look at, small is defined in terms of receipts, as less than either $2 million or $5 million.

Unlike a sales tax, which in legal terms is paid by consumers and accordingly added on top of the sales price, a GRT is paid by sellers and therefore included in the sales price. This difference is not likely to be important. If people are aware of the taxing techniques, only market conditions will determine how the burden of the new tax would be shared between seller and customer.

More important is that a sales tax is levied only on consumers and exempts business customers, while a GRT is levied on all sales regardless of the type of customer. This is the feature of the GRT that has drawn the most criticism, because of the potential effects of “pyramiding.” Suppose, for example (1) coal is sold to an aluminum smelting plant and then (2) the aluminum to an aircraft parts firm and then (3) the aluminum parts to an aircraft manufacturer and then (4) the finished airplane to an airline company and (5) airline tickets to passengers. In that case, if all five sellers are big businesses, and if all sales take place in Illinois, then the GRT will be collected five times before the passenger takes off from O’Hare. That seems like quite a pile of tax. But how bad is it really? I hope to show you that it is not bad at all. In fact just this much-maligned feature, combined with the exemption for small businesses, makes the GRT such a good tax both economically and politically.

THE ECONOMICS OF THE GROSS RECEIPTS TAX

If Illinois were an island unto itself, a “closed economy,” then the burden of the GRT would be divided somehow between Illinois corporate shareholders receiving lower dividends and Illinois consumers paying higher prices. Due to the “pyramiding” just described, if the GRT rate were high enough, say 20 percent instead of just one or two percent, there would be enough pressure to reduce the number of sales turnovers to encourage “vertical integration.” For example, the aluminum company might buy up the coal, aircraft parts and airline businesses so the only remaining sale would be to the passenger, and the tax would be imposed just once instead of five times. But this is all fantasy. A tax rate as low as one or two percent, even accumulated five times, will come to as much as 10 percent of the final product price only if inputs purchased from big businesses amount to 100 percent of each company’s costs, with no labor, no overhead, and no purchases from small businesses. It is reasonable to expect instead, even in this weird example, a final accumulated tax rate well below that now collected in sales taxes, not enough to spur any kind of change in business organization.

In reality, Illinois is not an island unto itself, not a closed economy. Most big businesses selling in Illinois are nation-wide or even global operations, and their sales in Illinois are a small fraction of their total business worldwide. The tax imposed by the Illinois state government on sales taking place in Illinois will make only a small impact on their total costs. And who will bear the burden? Not just Illinois shareholders, but shareholders worldwide will reap reduced dividends; not just Illinois consumers, but consumers worldwide will pay higher prices. But the effect, when spread over the world, will be very, very small.

For the same reason, in a global economy, pyramiding won’t be much of a problem. Only the occasional transaction between big businesses will take place in Illinois; most will take place elsewhere. The chance of five pyramiding transactions all taking place (1) between taxably big businesses (2) within Illinois leading (3) to a final sale to an Illinois consumer, is vanishingly small.

The truth is the burden of the Illinois GRT would be spread across the world market in the same way pollution from Illinois spreads throughout earth’s atmosphere. To suppose otherwise is to expect global corporations to adopt state-by-state, country-by-country pricing strategies ignoring general market conditions and focusing only on appropriately rewarding or punishing tax policy. That doesn’t seem at all likely.

In effect, then, the GRT is an ingenious device for raising money from out of state. A modern tax adapted to the modern global economy, it is designed to collect revenue at least cost to actual residents of our great state. It is similar to the royalties the state of Alaska and the various oil producing countries collect from oil mining revenues, the cost of which we all bear.

THE POLITICS OF THE GROSS RECEIPTS TAX

If the burden of the Illinois GRT is so small when spread all across the globe, why the fuss? From our new global perspective, it’s obvious. What if every state and every country, what if every taxing authority decided to do as Illinois might? It would be a conservative’s nightmare. Right now, people mean about the “race to the bottom.” Every state and every country competes with every other one to cut taxes and social services and offer subsidies to businesses to get them to invest there. The public sector shrinks, the private sector grows.

With the GRT, however, there is little point to a company moving a production facility into or out of state because it still would pay taxes, as before, on its sales to Illinois customers. To avoid the tax, the company would have to move its customers out of state.

This of course can be done to some extent, as will be illustrated in an example below, which is why the tax rate cannot be raised too far over rates nearby. But it is not at all simple to avoid this tax.

With the GRT, in other words, the “race to the bottom” can be reversed. Instead of cutting taxes, states and countries gain by raising them. Whoever raises more tax draws in more funds from the rest of the world. It could rapidly turn into a “race to the top.”

It is fun to speculate about this kind of future, might be fun even to speculate on it. Maybe the specter of such a “race to the top” would force the Federal Government to step in with a new national tax policy to take over the funding of health insurance and education and so on, so as to stop the states from upping the ante on each other. Maybe this story could even repeat itself somehow on the world stage.

But here I will end this line of thought and take us back to Illinois.

WHAT ABOUT HIGH-VOLUME, LOW MARGIN BUSINESSES?

These are businesses, typically distributors and retailers, where profit, whether large or small, is an unusually small proportion of the transacted volume. Typical would be an auto dealership, where the items dealt in are expensive and margins proportionately small. Sell a $20,000 car and profit is $1,000 on it, and that’s a great deal for a few hours work: wonderful business. But the GRT tax is on the $20,000 received from the customer, not on the $1,000 actually remaining as profit after costs have been paid. So a GRT of 2 percent would be $400 and the after tax profit would then be $600. That’s quite a chunk out of the pocket of the dealership owners, and they have a right to complain. But do we have to listen?

It is one thing to be driven out of business; another to have to live more modestly off it, knowing it is still a better deal than closing it down and selling the assets for cash. And how is this we can tell if the tax is really too high?

Suppose there are 20 auto dealerships before the tax is imposed. If after the tax one closes and the other 19 remain in business, is it polite to say that that one closed because of the tax. Really it must have been on the edge for a long time before the tax would force the Federal Government to step in

Continued on page 7
Now we celebrate war

by Rev. Mike Mulberry

Rev. Mike Mulberry is a pastor at the Community United Church of Christ. The following was submitted to the News-Gazette, which declined to publish it as an op-ed.

As another Memorial Day passed, we made the prosecu-
tion of war in this country such an idol that we do not dare grieve the dead (both American and Iraqi), critique the gov-
ernment, or call for peace, or we will be marginalized by those who think this is all some political gambit. Not one word of critique from the editorial staff of our community newspaper about war without a cogent reason, torture, secret prisons, pri-
ivate war contractors, war profiteers, the rape of a teenage girl and the burning of her family, the killing of civilians, the
planned bombing of an alternative media outlet, the use of
chemical weapons, the torture of the Ibbi's, is too much for the Wobblies to take.

The IWW is as vital to democracy today as it was 102
years ago. At 82 I am hopeful that the younger members of
the union remain important today. Some see Unions as bad
for business, but based on my years of Union membership
and leadership I know the importance of solidarity, boy-
cots, direct action and strikes to make gains for the work-
ers and their families. The IWFW is as vital to democracy today as it was 102
years ago. At 82 I am hopeful that the younger members of
the labor movement will continue to make progress as we did at the beginning many years ago.

We are proud to have a branch of the IWFW right here in
our own community: The Central Illinois General Mem-
bership Branch of the IWFW meets every second Saturday
of each month, at 1pm, in the Family Room of the Inde-
pendent Media Center inside the old Urbana Post Office
(Entrance on Elm Street). Remember our credo: An injury to one is an injury to all.

An Injury to One is an Injury to All

by Robert Walfeld

A few days ago I celebrated my 82nd birthday. Today I am speaking about one of the groups I am proud to be a part of
and that will shortly celebrate its 102nd year. This group about to turn 102 is called the IWFW, or better known as
the Industrial Workers of the World, the Wobblies.

The IWFW was formed back in 1905 and is the true
defender of union solidarity. Today we can thank this
group, for representing the spirit of the US labor move-
ment’s best contributions to society. For example, the
brave folks of the IWFW fought hard and won the eight-
hour workday. Unique to this group was the willingness to
brave folks of the IWW fought hard and won the eight-

I am thankful to be a member of the newly reemerging
Industrial Workers of the World. Wobblies for short.
A few days ago I celebrated my 82nd birthday. Today I am
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The Wobblies were willing to be involved in direct
action and defend fellow workers, and to impede the busi-
ess of abusive companies as necessary. Throughout histo-
ry, from its origin in the early 1900s through a resurgence in
the 1960s and continuing into the year 2007, the IWFW
has always been innovative and resilient.

There was a press conference called by
Champaign Police Chief R.T. Finney on
Friday, June 8, 2007 at 1 p.m. This was a chance for Finney to explain to the press,
and to the public, what happened the pre-
vious night in Westside Park when three
Champaign police officers were shot. The
officers hurt included Shannon Bridges,
John Murphy and Jack Armstrong. They
were shot by Donnell Clemons, a black
man was homeless and, like many who are
on the streets, mentally ill. Officer Bridges
was shot in the leg, the other two were
shot as they were recovering. Donnell
Clemons was shot six times by police and
remains in the hospital.

First, it is important to state that I per-
sonally condemn all violence and believe
that each life is precious. I personally
condemn all violence and believe
the young man who has lost his son in this war, has a
right to speak and has the right to
show up at our public schools to encourage our children to
enjoy the toys of war. Our teachers openly advocate for
such play. Our school administrators tell them not to put up their hands and
say, “I don’t know what we can do.”

Now proponents of peace are roundly mocked. Faith
community leaders do not dare lift up the word “peace” unless
the word is romanticized and irrelevant.

If the police do not have a clear and open
policy on the horizon and the drumbeat has start-
ed. The only real chance we have is people, enough people in our communities, which will transcend their political
viewpoints to recognize values that are more deeply held.

“Loomias” or “troublemakers” though they may be, we need sol-
diers, mothers of soldiers, former soldiers, editorialists,
reporters, administrators, teachers, and faith leaders who
care less about being right and winning and more about
walking the hard road of peace.
The Persistence of Racial Conflict in American Labor Unions: The Case of Henry Bell

By David Green

On January 20, 2006, Henry W. Bell III, a 41-year-old African-American journeyman electrician, resident of Champaign, and member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 601, filed a civil lawsuit against his union. Bell’s allegations of racial discrimination against him from events of January 2006, were presented to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which subsequently issued a Notice of a Right to Sue, resulting in a court trial by jury scheduled for this coming November (2007) in the U.S. District Court in Urbana.

Bell’s charges have been documented in the court records and in numerous interviews with the local mainstream press, with Carol and Aaron Ammons on the WEFT program “Higher Ground,” and with this writer. Bell claims that in January 2005, his union’s local officials violated his rights by failing to refer him to an electrical contractor who had been hired to perform work at the UIUC Alumni Center according to Bell’s request. Bell is a journeyman electrician in accordance with the University of Illinois’ “goals of good faith” regarding affirmative action in the hiring of minorities and women. Bell’s lawsuit is based on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which established the EEOC and other provisions to end allegations of workplace racial discrimination for potential legal action.

As stated in the Daily Illini of February 23, 2007, Michael Herbert, the union’s business manager and representative in the lawsuit, denies charges of discrimination and asserts that the union properly and legally followed its referral procedures. According to Herbert’s comments to the DI, IBEW Local 601 will defend itself in court. Herbert declared: “This is a legal action for that period and longer, in relation to both the women for successful entrance into the building trades, and has been poorly coordinated with the recruitment process of those trades.”

It is illustrative that in 1998, the most successful black contractor in Chicago noted that $7 billion volume of the top three construction firms in Chicago is more than consciously or unconsciously discriminate against African American applicants, and an educational system that has made little effort to prepare and recruit minorities and women for successful entrance into the building trades, and has been poorly coordinated with the recruitment process of those trades.

It is beyond dispute that undocumented immigration disproportionately impacts low-wage, mostly African American workers. The debate ought to be about what the solution is. Certainly, black Americans should view with suspicion the right wing’s newfound interest in their economic plight. If Republicans and other low-wage black workers, they have supported the proposed minimum wage hike, living wage protocols across the country and health care reform, all of which disproportionately impact poor blacks. So, we know their motives are suspect. They are simply exploiting the plight of black workers to advance an anti-immigrant agenda.

The fact is, what conservatives are prescribing as a solution does not work. It is beyond dispute that undocumented immigration disproportionately impacts low-wage, mostly African American workers. The debate ought to be about what the solution is. Certainly, black Americans should view with suspicion the right wing’s newfound interest in their economic plight. If Republicans and other low-wage black workers, they have supported the proposed minimum wage hike, living wage protocols across the country and health care reform, all of which disproportionately impact poor blacks. So, we know their motives are suspect. They are simply exploiting the plight of black workers to advance an anti-immigrant agenda.

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Illinois Covered = Health Security – Health Care Reform For All

By Jim Duffett

For the past 6 years, the first Tuesday in June has marked the observance of Hunger Awareness Day—a nationwide initiative to inform the general public about hunger issues affecting far too many of our friends and neighbors. While we’re all familiar with the hunger and malnutrition plaguing Third World nations, many people are surprised to discover that hunger and malnutrition—“food insecurity” in current parlance—exists in the United States. 35 million people in the US fit the definition of “food insecure”—defined by the USDA as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways” – with an increasing number of people threatening to fall between the cracks as the cost of living increases without a corresponding rise in wages or opportunity. It’s important to remember that nearly half the people the Foodbank serves through its 180 agencies and programs are employed; they’re working, but are still unable to acquire enough food for their households while dealing with other expenses. Other clients are between jobs or paycheck. Still others are elders living on fixed incomes.

The Eastern Illinois Foodbank exists to alleviate hunger through a network of food pantries and other agencies in a 14-county area of eastern Illinois. On June 4, 2007—the eve of this year’s Hunger Awareness Day—the Foodbank presented “Working For Food: Food Insecurity in Eastern Illinois”, a symposium designed to frame hunger awareness through several different food-system lenses. Speakers included Andrea Rundell, the Foodbank’s Director of External and Agency Relations; Teola Trowbridge, former Logistics Manager for Kraft Foods; Martha Trenkamp, Registered Dietitian with Carle Clinic; Dennis Riggs, Executive Director of Broadlands Food Pantry (he’s also a farmer); Robin Orr, Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, University of Illinois; Cheryl O’Leary, Principal of Garden Hills Elementary School; and Nathan Montgomery, Executive Director of Salt & Light in Champaign. The discussion was moderated by Jim Hires, Executive Director of the Eastern Illinois Foodbank.

Each speaker touched on food insecurity as delineated by their own professional experiences—Ms. O’Leary’s school, for example, was the pilot school in 2006-2007 for the Foodbank’s Backpack program, designed to send kid-friendly food home with kids in need on Fridays so they’re able to supplement what they eat over the weekend and return to school fed and ready to learn. Ms. Trowbridge touched on the reality of the efficiencies of food manufacturing (more efficiency means less food on the donated market). Mr. Riggs spoke of his pantry’s attempt to address rural poverty, while Mr. Montgomery spoke of Salt & Light’s attempt to help the urban poor. Ms. Orr explained the relationship of Farm Bill legislation to the funding and administration of the Food Stamp Program (a large portion of the Farm Bill deals specifically with the food stamp program and other food assistance and nutrition programs), while Ms. Trenkamp spoke about the increase in low-income patients coming to her practice with maladies directly related to poor nutrition, such as obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease.

Members of the audience seemed surprised, at times, by the scope of the problem—the number of people in eastern Illinois, for example, at risk of food insecurity (meaning they’re either already there or are flirting with being there) is 136,000. Families who technically earn a gross income just above the Federal poverty line – $20,650/year for a household of four—have $1 per person per day for food after basic expenses such as housing, utilities, childcare and transportation are subtracted. Addressing hunger in our community—any community—requires two approaches by citizens: the legislative, long-term, systemic approach, and the logistic, boots-on-the-ground, immediate approach. All members of our community can use these approaches—the former by urging state and national legislators to work together to raise the minimum wage for workers, to provide affordable-to-all health care for all citizens, and to legislate, via the Farm Bill, for an increase in food stamp benefits for...

Hunger Awareness Day 2007

by Lisa Braits

Jim Duffett, an Urbana resident, is the Executive Director of Campaigns for Better Health www.cbconline.or CBHC. Founded in 1989, it is the largest health care coalition in Illinois, representing 330 diverse organizations. As the General Assembly is now in overtime, health care reform and education funding continue to be two of the major issues yet to be decided. Will members (primarily the Democrats) of the General Assembly have the “Profiles of Courage” to help working families or will it be business as usual and corporate interests once again prevail? Currently our State Senator Frenich’s position on health care reform is the opposite of what his yard signs state: “working for our future.” More on this later.

Every time that the pendulum moves back into the public debate for affordable, accessible and quality health care, the opponents of fairness and those profiting over the current disjointed system succeed by instilling fear and rolling out lie after lie.

By “Doing Nothing,” which is currently State Senator Frenich’s position—in just the next four years the following will occur:

• Another 150,200,000 working Illinois families will lose their health insurance;
• Our medical providers and the uninsured/underinsured will be going more in debt;
• Illinois taxpayers will continue to subsidize the health care of major profitable corporations at the tune of over $100 million because many of their employees (who are paid below a living wage) are being dumped into public programs for their health insurance instead of having the same health insurance that these corporations provide their management and
• Those Illinois businesses and individuals still lucky enough to have insurance will be forced to pay an additional $15.6 billion in unnecessary health care costs.

How can that be? The uninsured pay for about 35 percent of the cost of the care they receive. Most are forced to use credit cards to pay for this care, which leads many into bankruptcy. The remaining amount is paid in the form of higher insurance premiums. This remaining amount—sometimes called “uncompensated care”—is built into the rates that hospitals and doctors charge insurance plans. Insurance plans then pass this cost on to insured Illinois by raising insurance premiums. In 2007, premiums for Illinois families with job-based coverage will be $1,130 higher due to this cost shifting.

Illinois Covered tackles the health care crisis in many ways:

First, there is major system change. For once, policy makers are not just throwing money at the problem. Major cost containment measures and delivery system changes that will occur will improve the quality of care. Because of this, when fully implemented in 2011, these cost containment measures would result in reductions in private health insurance premium growth by $1,775 per year for a family policy and a 9% decrease for businesses.

Second, Illinois Covered contains business sector relief. Small businesses contributing at least 70% of cost of health insurance premiums would save $2,273 per employee under Illinois Covered. Small businesses that are currently unable to afford health care could choose from a number of plans and save thousands of dollars per employee per year versus what it would cost them now.

Third, Illinois Covered expands consumer choice and protects the middle class. Individuals and families making 400% of poverty ($40,000 for an individual, $82,500 for a family of four) would be eligible for affordable coverage on a sliding scale on their current health care plan or choice another plan. Illinois families will have control and for once will have peace of mind and health security. Preserving existing conditions and discriminatory premiums pricing will no longer occur.

Fourth, Illinois Covered expands coverage for low-income adults by expanding a number of existing programs and expands access to people with disabilities.

Continued on next page

FOOD BUDGET EXERCISE

(original source for exercise—“Hunger: A Picture of Washington”, Jan 2002; available at www.childrensalliance.org)

A single parent with three children takes a job paying $10 per hour, without benefits, working 40 hours per week for 52 weeks. Is this family’s income above or below the poverty line? Below, we subtract the following monthly expenses from this family’s income and then calculate how much money is available for their food budget.

Total number of household members: 4
Annual income (before taxes): $20,800
Monthly income (divide #2 by 12): $1,733.33

Total monthly expenses:
Rent=$700
Utilities=$150
Transportation=$213
Phone=$50
Childcare=$500
Total expenses $1,613

Food money for one person per day (divide by number in household, then divide by 30 days): $1.00

These numbers do not include savings, medical expenses, clothing/diapers, books/school supplies, household supplies, personal care items, etc... The 2007 Federal Poverty Level for a family of 4 is $20,650/year. This family is ABOVE the poverty line.
Illinois Covered = Health Security – Health Care Reform For ALL

Continued from previous page

In addition, young adults up to 29 years old will have the ability to stay on their parents’ health plan.

For each $1 of investment spent on Illinois Covered will generate more than $3 in new health care savings—mainly through reduction in growth of health insurance premiums paid by Illinois businesses, families and individuals. Weighing both these new costs and savings generated by Illinois Covered, the net financial effect on Illinois businesses and households is equivalent to a significant tax cut.

Big Lie #1: It is not about the GRT or any new revenue sources about health care reform.

FACT: We all know if the funding mechanism were a tax on aliens, the doom and gloom scenario and the lies would be rolled out. It has worked for the opponents of health care reform for decades, so why change the strategy?

Senator Frerichs used in describing Illinois Covered was then State Senator Barack Obama. In 2004 the General Assembly passed the Affordable Health Care Act (HCJA), whose main sponsor was then State Senator Barack Obama.

The Health Care Justice Act did the following: established a Task Force appointed by both GOP and Democratic leaders, which held 22 public hearings where over 2500 people attended. It received testimony from over 400 people, and all the major stakeholders. The plans submitted by both the Chamber of Commerce and the insurance industry were, in the end, opposed by an overwhelming majority of HCJA Task Force members. Both GOP and Democratic task force members reached consensus on a plan. This was nearly a two-year public process. Illinois Covered contains nearly 85% of the Task Force’s recommendations.

So Where is our “Progressive” Senator on Illinois Covered? Currently AWOL.

During the last week in May, Illinois Covered could have passed the Senate if State Senator Frerichs had voted for it. It missed passage by just one vote — Senator Frerichs’ vote. Senator Frerichs criticized the plan as a massive Medical expansion program. Quite the contrary State Senator Righther and State Representative Black, both Republicans quoted Senator Frerichs and thanked him at a “Do Nothing” Champaign Chamber of Commerce event for making the remarks. Coincidentally the words that Senator Frerichs used in describing Illinois Covered were identical to the propaganda that the Illinois Chamber has been using.

Next Senator Frerichs stated to the Campaign for Better Health Care, in labor unions, and to other organizations that he did not run on health care and that his top concerns are education funding and future state pensioners. Many of us attended events and debates that occurred during his fall 2006 campaign and health care was definitely discussed. Then- candidate Frerichs even attended the public hearing that the Adequate Health Care Task Force held at the Champaign train station in February of 2006.

Next he stated that Illinois Covered did not have a payment mechanism to finance the program. Illinois Covered has several revenue sources to pay for the plan, some of which he opposes. While, we support initiatives for additional education funding, we do not subscribe to the either education funding or health care funding argument that has also been voiced. Currently the funding mechanism for education (tax swap), which Senator Frerichs supports, is as dead as the Governor’s original GRT proposal. There is currently no funding mechanism for education funding. Yet, Senator Frerichs continues to state that a funding mechanism exists for education and no funding mechanism exists for health care reform.

Now Senator Frerichs is quoted as saying “I just don’t think the timing is right or that the particular bill is the right way to address our health care problem in the state, and I am not willing to trade a vote for 30 pieces of silver in order to do that.” Once again those comments are totally wrong. Let’s look at the facts.

“I just don’t think the timing is right"

• 21.4 percent (26,974 adults) are uninsured in the 52nd district. Illinois Covered would help all these people. When will the timing be right? When 30% of your constituents are uninsured?

• Thousands of working families who currently have health insurance and live at below 400% of poverty ($82,500 for a family of four) would be helped by Illinois Covered.

• Tens of thousands of college students (graduate assistants) attending Parkland College, Danville Area Community College, and the U of I would all have access to health care through Illinois Covered.

• Businesses providing health insurance would see a 9% reduction of their health care premiums by 2011.

• An average family with insurance would see premium reductions of $1,775 a year by 2011.

• An additional $13 million in direct support for local hospitals and millions of additional dollars to the physicians community in higher reimbursement rates would occur.

“I just don’t think … that this particular bill is the right way to address our health care problem in the state”

• Consumers, labor, hospitals, majority of doctors, numerous other health care providers and the list goes on all have endorsed Illinois Covered. Reaching consensus among these groups has never happened until now.

• 20 International union presidents have signed a letter to Senator Frerichs expressing their support for Illinois Covered and urging his support;

• 10 major national organizations have signed a letter stating their support of Illinois Covered as one of the best current plans being submitted in any state so far;

For many of us who supported Senator Frerichs in his election last year and believed in his message on his yard sign “working for our future” are bewildered at his current regressive (an Democratic Party) position. Illinois Covered is a plan built on shared opportunities and shared responsibilities. The taxpayers are currently subsidizing Senator Frerichs’ health care insurance. Why does Senator Frerichs want to deny the opportunity to tens of thousands of his constituents to be able to afford health insurance?

If health care reform does not pass this year, serious reform will never pass in Illinois. That is the goal that the opponents of Illinois Covered want to see happen. While, all the democratic presidential candidates are talking about national health care, which is positive, we will be lucky to pass some form of national health care by 2014/15. Now is the time to pass Illinois Covered. We can no longer afford to wait.

History has a strange way of repeating itself. The Democratically-controlled Congress in the early 1990s used the same excuses that our current State Senator is using by not passing health care reform, and they and all of us paid the price in the 1994 election. The same will be true in 2008 and 2010 election if the Democrats, or “progressive” Democrats as Senator Frerichs refers to himself, continue to line up behind the big insurance companies and the big business.

The time is NOW to show your vision and your commitment to “working for our future.” This is the time for a profile of courage not a profile of politics as usual in Springfield to occur. Call Senator Frerichs at 355-5252. Tell him: 1) to vote for Illinois Covered, 2) to support the funding for Illinois Covered; and 3) to understand the importance that you place on this issue as a citizen and a voter.

Hunger Awareness Day 2007

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The Foodbank and its agencies feed people NOW through donations of money, food and time. This fight is happening on two fronts, and we must be able to feed people—and better our communities—while trying to effect change.

The foodbank and health care paradigm within a large complex takes time; but working together to provide access to nutritious and healthy emergency food to fellow citizens when they need it is something that is crucial and can happen immediately—and happens every day here in Eastern Illinois.

Resources:
Eastern Illinois Foodbank—www.eifoodbank.org or call 328-3663
Illinois Food Bank Association—www.illinoisfoodbanks.org
World Hunger Year—www.worldhungeryear.org
Community Food Security Coalition—www.foodsecurity.org
Legalizing the Oldest Profession

by Marcia Zambahlen

Now that I have your attention, let me proceed with the subject of midwifery. Referring to midwifery, the practice of helping women throughout the childbearing cycle by offering support, advice, and special birthing techniques. On June 30th, you can help this age-old profession win back legal rights to practice outside of medical institutions in Illinois. Illinois Families for Midwifery (IFFM) is sponsoring a 9-11 am pancake breakfast at McKinley Foundation to support efforts to pass Senate Bill 385, the Midwifery Licensure Act.

AREN'T MIDWIVES ALREADY LICENSED IN ILLINOIS?

For Illinois midwives to legally practice, they must work under a licensed obstetrician in a hospital setting. These midwives are Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNMs) who can be licensed. They are trained in both nursing and midwifery (advanced practice nurses with at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited university). But Direct Entry Midwives (DEM), those who enter directly into the midwifery profession without being nurses first and maintain autonomous practices outside of institutions, cannot be licensed in Illinois. Some acquire their skills through apprenticeships (the "Farm" in Tennessee) others through formal classes or programs like Seattle Midwifery School. A college degree is not required. DEMs can be Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) in some states to reflect the extensive clinical training they receive (midwife.org). This requires attendance at an accredited midwifery school where they have met rigorous requirements and passed written exams and hands-on skills evaluation. They must be licensed to practice as midwives.

WHY DO PEOPLE CHOOSE A HOME BIRTH?

Some choose a home birth for financial reasons. Uninsured women must pay hospital costs out of pocket (e.g., the Amish). Hiring a midwife is cheaper than a basic hospital birth ($2000 v. $5000). Others choose home births due to their personal philosophy: religion, cultural preference, modesty/privacy, and a desire to avoid excessive interference to the natural process of labor and delivery. One local woman believed that routine hospital procedures caused her to have a cesarean on her first birth (Google the "cascade effect") so she chose the Midwife Model of Care for her second birth. "My doctor wasn't going to let me attempt a v-bac [vaginal birth after cesarean] so I got my vaginal birth at home." Although she could have chosen a hospital CNM, she knew that even though they are lighter on medical interventions, they still operate within the Medical Model of Care due to the fact that they are in a medical institution that regulates their actions. (See table on next page.)

These differences leave some women feeling that a home birth is safer. They point to data showing that planned home births with an experienced midwife have a lower perinatal death rate than hospital births. To some extent this may reflect self-selection (women with high risk pregnancies rarely opt to deliver at home and will not midwives to assist them). However, it could reflect the quality of midwifery care. The US has a higher infant mortality rate than 21 other industrialized countries—countries that primarily use the midwifery model of care. "In the five nations with the world’s lowest infant mortality and lowest rates of technological intervention, midwives attend 70% of all births without a physician in the birth room" (MANA). In the US if a woman is in danger then the home-birth midwife takes her to the hospital. The midwife is trained to know what a problem and how to complete a hospital transport. Home-birth midwives also screen for potential problems before birth and if a situation is beyond their expertise they refer women elsewhere. In short, it’s not just the hippies and fringe people that are choosing home births.

WHY HAS IT TAKEN SO LONG TO LICENSE MIDWIVES IN ILLINOIS?

In the 80s DEMs in Illinois were legal by judicial interpretation. In 1997, the state investigated midwives for practicing medicine without a license and served them cease and desist orders. Shortly thereafter, DEMs were prohibited from practicing in Illinois. This change was spearheaded primarily by medical establishments (Illinois Department of Public Health, The Illinois State Medical Society and the Illinois chapter of the American College of Nurse Midwives) and fueled by public myths regarding midwifery.

There are so many reasons to license midwives. Licensing would ensure that a home midwife has the ability to make money. Is that why medical practitioners have reason to believe their way is the better way and get to use a tradition of paternalism to legislate their beliefs? Laws regulating maternity care can be connected to profit. For example, the Chicago Birth Center (CBC) was delivering about 2000 babies a year at home by 1929. During the Great Depression the primary hospital supporter closed the center down for economic reasons. The originator began running the center through separate funds. “As more and more babies were being delivered by doctors, in or out of hospitals, states around the country were passing laws about midwifery. In some states it became illegal for a midwife to practice.” (chicabirthstory.com)

This history has biased our reactions to stories we hear about home births. Rather than reinforcing the stories of positive home birth outcomes and chastising the problematic hospital births we do otherwise. We blame the “botched homebirth” on the midwife or mother and praise the doctors for having “done all they could” or “being there to save a terrible situation” even if their own actions might have contributed to the process (and as a doula I’ve seen this happen several times). "Women with “some” midwives who carry oxygen and dopplers, etc., and how they are trained to watch for danger signs, sending women to hospitals when something goes wrong, we merely focus on their use of technology.”

The purpose of IFIM is to increase public awareness of the safety, availability, and benefits of the Midwifery Model of Care and lobbying for a Certified Professional Midwife
The Anti-War “Die-In”  
by Shara Esbenshade

On Saturday, May the 26th, a group of high school students took dramatic action to address American complacency and political inaction with regards to the war in Iraq. In a visual form of protest meant to bring home the reality of the death and destruction nearly 30 youth fell to the ground in unison at the intersection of Green St and Wright St in front of the Alma Mater. They repeated this “die-in” every time the cars stopped for the red light from 12 to 1:30 pm. Several passersby stopped and joined them. The frustration Americans are feeling nationally with the recent passage of the war funding bill was apparent that Saturday. Both among the devoted student protesters and among those who cheered them on. You can view video of the Die-In on the Independent Media Center’s website at.

With this protest the students demanded that our congressional representative Timothy Johnson and senators Barack Obama and Richard Durbin vote anti-war. Letters were sent to Johnson, Obama, & Durbin and they were invited to attend. This war has killed too many, and it is past time our politicians do their part in ending it, not as anti-war politicians,” not as Democrats, nor as Republicans, but as responsible citizens of this world who should, out of compassion for others, work for peace.

This action was a powerful display of a fact that mainstream media has been shamelessly overlooking; that the youth have not yet succumbed to apathy.

The Gross Receipts Tax

By Continued from page 1

3. Following the money. If transparency were total, this would be irrelevant; but in fact it is hard for tax authorities to accurately track the flow of funds to figure out who gets what and who owes what. Every real tax collection scheme has a lot to do with practicality. The Gross Receipts Tax in particular is relatively easy to enforce and collect—and that consideration can beat down a lot of high principle. Other corporate taxes may be levied for the same reason—easy to enforce and easy to collect. These three points make clear why it is a real problem that many large corporations pay few or no taxes in Illinois. Leaving morals aside, they are an underutilized resource for the state.

What about the opposition storm of criticism?

The howls of outrage from the business community are a good bar the tax would hit its target. Raising taxes is hard for an elected government; redistributive taxation even harder, where those taxed know they won’t get the benefits, and those to benefit remain either voiceless or cynical. In the meantime, we need to challenge hysteria, the usual voice of the right-wing. Hey, it’s just a little tax.

License Law in the State of Illinois. IFFM states, “Illinois women deserve to have access to all the nationally certified midwifery care providers that women in 22 other states, including nearby Wisconsin and Minnesota, can choose from.” Contact Pat Cole, the President of IFFM at 309-722-3345 or ilaminlesformidwifery@gmail.com for more information.

African Great Lakes Initiative

David Zarembska, coordinator of African Great Lakes Initiative, Cecile Nyiramiya of Rwanda, and Rezvon Masitsa of Kenya will speak on the topic, “Healing from Dead-ly Violence” on Friday, June 29 at 7 PM at the Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting-house, 1904 E. Main, Urbana. Donations for African Great Lakes Initiative will gladly be accepted.

African Great Lakes Initiative is a Quaker-based organization promoting peace activities at the grassroots level in the Great Lakes region of Africa. This area, named for several large lakes, including Lake Victoria, includes the countries of Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

The Odyssey Project

The Odyssey Project is a free college-accredited course in the humanities offered to workers and low-income men and women in Champaign County. Classes meet twice a week from September to May, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Douglass Branch Library in Champaign. Tuition is free, as are books, transportation, and childcare (at the nearby Douglass Community Center).

The classes are taught by esteemed University of Illinois faculty, and students who enroll in the course will pursue an intensive study of philosophy, art history, literature, U.S. history, and critical thinking and writing.