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Change to Win Leader Vows Solidarity Politics and Health Care Fight Critical

Cleveland---A Change to Win Federation leader promised that his union, the million-member United Food and Commercial Workers, would stand shoulder to shoulder with the IBEW in the fight for working families, particularly in politics and the campaign to guarantee health care benefits for everyone.

“If we look at the condition of workers today, we see real fear about health care – fear that they could lose health care, or fear because of the rising costs of health care,” said UFCW President Joseph T. Hansen. “With more than 46 million Americans without health care, it’s time for a change, and the labor movement can lead that change.”

Hansen insisted that the split in the labor movement that occurred last year, with the UFCW joining an exodus of unions out of the AFL-CIO, would not prevent unions from working together, particularly in politics.

“Unions may have our differences, but we remain united in our goals. We are still one movement. We will confront our challenges together, and we will prevail,” he said.

Hansen pointed to a UFCW survey showing that 8 out of 10 union and nonunion workers under 30 years old “believed they would be better off in a union. There is a greater need for unions today than at any time in the past 60 years,” he said.

As the only labor member of the Citizen’s Health Care Working Group, Hansen has a unique view of the health care crisis, having collected information over 16 months of public hearings. “The public is demanding reform,” he said. “The U.S. health care system only works for the wealthy. It doesn’t work for most Americans.”

Hansen said the UFCW survey showed overwhelming support for this statement: “We can’t just rely on our market system to reform health care. We need to change the system.”

The change should start with the leadership in the House and Senate “because they have betrayed us,” Hansen said. “For most Americans, there are no Red states or Blue states. There is only a state of concern about the problems they face today.”

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