

Legislative Report

SMC Government Relations on the GO

by Eileen Anderson

SMC has a strong tradition of grassroots lobbying. Last fall we found our voices and orchestrated an all out push to move HB 2005 - small group insurance market reform - out of the House Insurance committee.

We found our voices again on February 27, when we hosted a teleconference meeting with Representative Scott Boyd. *Dynamic Business* covered Governor Rendell's Prescription for PA and his plan to cover the uninsured. We deemed it appropriate to give Representative Boyd, co-chair of the Pennsylvania House Health Care Task Force, an opportunity to present the

"We small business owners must find our voices and speak up if we are to have a seat at the table among the bigger interests."

- Eileen Anderson

GOP's health care counter-proposal. He engaged in lively debate with several members and staff at our Harrisburg office and twenty members gathered in SMC's Pittsburgh conference room.

Representative Boyd insisted that the problem is not the

uninsured but the underlying cost of health care. The GOP package of bills keeps employers providing health care in a competitive marketplace rather than moving to a state-run government system. They would achieve this by tax credits to employers for wellness, disease management, and health savings accounts. Educated consumers and cost transparency are also integral components of the plan.

SMC is not taking a position on legislation to cover the uninsured but the meeting enlarged our network of legislators. The health care debate and search for solutions must involve both sides of the aisle, employers, insurers, providers and consumers. The meeting also gave us another chance to push for insurance market reform and the adoption of modified community rating to reduce premium rate volatility.

Part of advocacy is educating members, lawmakers, and the public about our issues. Your SMC membership gives you the opportunity to stay informed through *Dynamic Business* magazine and the e-mail *Government Update Newsletter*.

Another part of advocacy is making the connections with lawmakers. SMC provides members with multiple opportunities. In addition to our grassroots lobbying trips and legislative receptions, we have our new teleconference center. With that

capability, Harrisburg and the General Assembly are just a mouse click away.

Find your voice and join us any way you can. We continue our push on several health care bills, lawsuit abuse reform, and business tax reform. We are traveling to Harrisburg on May 5 and to Washington, D.C. on June 3 and 4. There is no more effective advocate than a small business owner speaking directly with a lawmaker about his/her concerns.

If trips don't fit your schedule, volunteer to call or write lawmakers. Join our media list and make yourself available to speak with a journalist on an issue in which you have experience. Promote small business by adding the National Small Business Association's "70 MILLION STRONG & VOTING CAMPAIGN" logo to your e-mail signature. (Please send me an e-mail if you need a copy of the logo - eileenanderson@smc.org).

When we join together and speak collectively our voices will be heard on the important issues. We must do everything within our power to encourage small businesses and entrepreneurs. Big things start small. We are the future. We are the people we have been waiting for. ▼

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