



*The RWV coordinating team of Lois Uttley, Byllye Avery, Amy Allina, Eesha Pandit and Cindy Pearson released the following statement March 21, 2010 at 11:35pm, immediately following the final vote of the House of Representatives.*

**Statement in response to the House of Representatives votes in support of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act**

The House of Representatives' vote tonight for health care reform is a courageous and historic accomplishment. Despite facing a campaign of fear tactics, protests, misinformation and even slurs from opponents, a majority of House members have heard and responded to the millions of women crying out for the health care that we and our families so desperately need. Unfortunately, our leaders have also had to meet the demands of anti-choice lawmakers who threatened to block passage of the legislation.

In the same way that Social Security and Medicare improved the health and well-being of so many Americans, the health reform plan approved by the House tonight will make a real and significant difference in the lives of millions of our families, neighbors and communities. The immediate benefits will include the opportunity to keep our adult children on family health insurance policies until age 26. We will enjoy the peace of mind of knowing that insurance companies will no longer be able to deny coverage to children with pre-existing conditions or set lifetime limits on the amount of medical care they will cover under our policies. There will be immediate and continuing relief for seniors who have fallen into the Medicare Prescription Drug "donut hole."

Because of this vote, women will gain health security because insurers will no longer be able to deny insurance coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, like breast cancer; and we will no longer suffer from "gender rating" that insurers use to charge women more than men for the same policies. We will also gain from the availability of affordable health insurance for millions more families, from the guarantee that maternity care will be covered and from the availability of screening and preventive services without any cost-sharing barriers.

We owe a debt of thanks to the women who raised their voices -- over many, many years and especially over the last 18 months -- to bring about these important reforms. As House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in her closing remarks tonight, health reform "is personal for women." Women across the country shared personal stories about their health care, stories which demonstrated that we're all vulnerable to losing coverage and to receiving poor quality health care. These women insisted that public policy respond to the needs of the people. We also owe our thanks to three women who brought persistent

and brave leadership to the task of achieving this legislative outcome – House Speaker Pelosi, House Rules Committee Chairwoman Louise Slaughter and her Co-Chair in leading the Pro-Choice Caucus in Congress, Diana DeGette. We thank President Barack Obama, as well, whose vision, inspiration and commitment were essential to the success of this historic effort.

With great disappointment, we acknowledge that this victory came at a cost – new and continued restrictions on access to abortion coverage. The legislation imposes unfair and unnecessary burdens on women who choose to purchase abortion coverage. It will expand significantly the pool of women who are not able to obtain coverage for this basic reproductive health care. The legislation permits states to prohibit private insurance coverage of abortion in plans offered through state insurance exchanges. We are deeply disappointed that as the price of securing passage of this legislation, anti-choice lawmakers succeeded in extracting from a pro-choice President a re-affirmation of the Congressionally-imposed restrictions on federal funding of abortion contained in the Hyde Amendment. We recommit ourselves to working to eliminate this unjust and punitive policy which prevents low-income women from receiving the comprehensive reproductive health care they need.

There were other disappointments along the way, including the unjust exclusion of immigrants, and the lack of a public option that would challenge the out-of-control price increases of for-profit insurers. There also was the dismaying decision to include a one-sided “conscience clause” that protects health providers or payers that oppose abortion, but fails to protect those providers who honor women’s right to this legal health service. But on balance we look back at the woman's vision for quality, affordable health care developed and issued by Raising Women’s Voices and see that the bill takes very substantial steps toward those goals.