...Health care reform

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2011, levy a tax of 5.4 percent on income above $500,000 for individuals and $1 million for couples. It would also tax the sale of medical devices at 2.5 percent.

The Senate plan would increase the Medicare tax half a percent (to 1.95 percent) on earnings over $200,000 for individuals and $250,000 for couples. It would tax elective cosmetic medical procedures at 5 percent. It would charge fees on the health care sector, allocated by market share: $2.3 billion a year on pharmaceutical manufacturers, $2 billion on medical device manufacturers, and $6.7 billion a year on health insurance companies. And it would put a slight brake on health insurance executive pay by limiting the deductibility of executive and employee compensation to $500,000 per individual.

The Senate bill also saves money by making cuts and changes to Medicare, including a $113 billion cut in subsidies to the privatized Medicare Advantage – in which seniors get coverage under private insurance plans paid for by Medicare; slowing increases in doctor and hospital reimbursement rates; and future cuts to more expensive procedures if they don't get better results than less-expensive procedures. Medicare premiums would be raised for higher-income seniors.

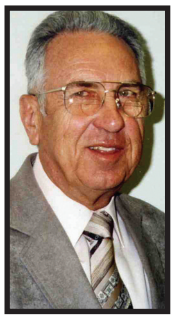
And the Senate bill imposes a tax on so-called "Cadillac" health plans sponsored by employers: Plans that exceed $8,500 a year per individual and $23,000 per family would be taxed — at 40 percent of the value of the plan above that threshold. Coverage for retirees not yet on Medicare, for employees in high-risk professions, and in the 17 highest-cost states would have higher thresholds. This is the provision Trumka objected to.

Only one Republican voted for the House bill, and 39 Democrats voted against it, including Ohio congressman and former presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich, who explained his vote in a press statement: "In [this bill], the government is requiring at least 21 million Americans to buy private health insurance from the very industry that causes costs to be so high, which will result in at least $70 billion in new annual revenue, much of which is coming from taxpayers."

In the bill that earlier passed the House Education and Labor Committee, Kucinich had succeeded in passing an amendment allowing states to set up single-payer health care systems. But that provision was not included in the bill the House leadership passed.

Washington Rep. Brian Baird was the only local Democrat to oppose the bill.

IN MEMORIAM



BOB KENNEDY, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO from 1975 to 1981, and the first directing business representative of Machinists District Council 24, passed away Nov. 18 after a long fight with bone cancer. He was 82.

Kennedy retired in 1989 as a Machinists Grand Lodge auditor, a post he had held since 1981.

He served three terms as president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. He was defeated in his bid for a fourth term in 1981 by Irv Fletcher. Following that election the Machinists appointed Kennedy as a grand lodge auditor based in Denver.

Robert G. Kennedy Sr. was born in Pleasanton, Kansas, on Jan, 2, 1927. He moved with his mother to Portland in 1942. He graduated from Jefferson High School before enlisting in the Marine Corps during World War II.

Upon his return in 1946, Kennedy went to work for Carnation Milk Company and joined Auto Mechanics Lodge 1005.

He began his full-time career in the labor movement in January 1962 as an elected business rep for Lodge 1005. Four years later he was elected as the business rep for Machinists District 24. In 1974 the IAM decided to make District 24 a full-service district for the three Portland locals and expand its jurisdiction to encompass four other locals in Oregon and SW Washington. Kennedy became the first directing business representative of the new council.

During his career, Kennedy served on the State Apprenticeship and Training Council and the Oregon Economic Development Commission; on the board of the Union Labor Retirement Association, which built Union Manor retirement complexes in Portland; and as president of the Oregon Machinists Council. He helped found the Machinists Credit Union.

He was named to the Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council's Hall of Fame in July 1999.

Kennedy is survived by his wife of 62 years, Arlene; two sons, Robert Jr., a retired member of IBEW Local 48, and Ronald, a retired U.S. Air Force careerist; three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that remembrances be donations to Midway Christian Church, 2546 SE 131st Ave., Portland.

LEE KING, president of the Linn-Benton-Lincoln Central Labor Council and a member of United Steelworkers Local 6163, died Nov. 18 after suffering a heart attack while driving home from work. He was 67.

An electrician for 33 years at ATI Wah Chang in Albany, King was active in the community, serving on the Workforce Investment Board, the Mid-Willamette Industrial Electrical Apprenticeship Committee, the Steelworkers' Legislative Education Committee, and as a delegate to the Oregon AFL-CIO.

Elmer Lee King was born in Prague, Oklahoma, on April 24, 1942. He spent his childhood in Oklahoma, Florida and California.

He graduated from Richmond High School in Richmond, Calif., where he lettered in baseball, football and basketball. He graduated from Western Baptist (now Corban) College in Salem in 1973.

King married Beverly Williams in 1965. They had a daughter, Sherry. They moved to Salem in 1970. They later divorced.

King married Lorraine (Wheat) Gibson in 1983.

King is survived by his wife, daughter, two sons, and seven grandchildren.

Memorials in King's honor can be sent to the Steelworkers Local 6163 Scholarship Fund, 1400 Salem Ave., Albany, OR 97321.