



## **National Treasury Employees Union Legislative Action**

111th Congress 1st Session

### **INCREASING ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY OF FEHBP/ PROVIDING PAID PARENTAL LEAVE**

The ever increasing costs of health care continue to confront federal employees and retirees. Once again, in 2009, the enrollee share of the premium for the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP) will rise at a pace higher than many enrollees can afford. More than half of enrollees, approximately 4 million, face a 2009 premium increase of 13 percent. The overall average FEHBP premium hike is 7 percent. Yet, the program has seen benefit and coverage cutbacks, higher co-payments and the addition of new plans that undermine the integrity of the system. NTEU supports a comprehensive review of FEHBP to see how costs can be held down for the 8 million enrolled federal employees, annuitants and their families.

NTEU supports requiring the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to apply for a subsidy available under the Medicare prescription drug law to keep premium costs down. A Government Accountability Office Report (GAO-07-141) found that had OPM received the subsidy, premiums in one year alone could have been reduced by an average of 2% and in some plans by 3.5% to 4%. Another important component in keeping costs under control is maintaining the integrity of the FEHBP risk pool of federal employees, retirees and their families. Should new groups receive eligibility to buy into FEHBP at any time in the future, NTEU supports separate risk groups for their participation. Finally, NTEU supports studying whether OPM can reduce costs by directly negotiating for drug prices as done by the Veterans Administration.

Accessibility is crucial to the success of the program. Currently, FEHBP covered dependents are dropped at age 22. Over thirty states have passed bills raising similar caps. NTEU supports raising the cap for dependents under FEHBP, preferably to age 25.

Finally, our nation's parental leave policies are lagging behind. We are the only industrialized nation that does not guarantee paid leave. Bills to provide federal employees with paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child have been introduced by Sen. James Webb (D-VA) and Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY). The bills provide federal employees four weeks of paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child and allow the use of up to eight weeks of accrued paid sick time to care for a new child. NTEU supports these bills.

#### **NTEU urges:**

- **Support for requiring OPM to apply for the Medicare prescription drug subsidy.**
- **Cosponsorship of H.R. 626 and S. 354, Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act.**
- **Support for raising the age 22 dependent coverage cap under FEHBP.**