



## ROBS NEWSLETTER

APRIL/MAY 2008

RETIRES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

ISSUE 73

WEB ADDRESS FOR  
ROBS: [robsny.org](http://robsny.org)

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General meetings  
**BRENTWOOD  
PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
2 Avenue & 4th Street Phone: 273-7883  
Meetings at 10 AM

**FRIDAY, MAY 2**

**History Video**

**Election of ROBS Officers-  
Book/CD, Video, DVD swap**

**JUNE 6**

**SPRING LUNCHEON**

**MOLLY MALONE'S  
IN BAY SHORE**

**12 - 3:30 PM**

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### AFL-CIO Survey Shows Healthcare System in Crisis

A new survey released March 25 by the AFL-CIO finds that an astounding 95% of those who responded say that the nation's healthcare system needs to be completely rebuilt or fundamentally changed. Nearly 27,000 people—including 1,600 AFT members—completed the online survey, and more than 7,000 submitted personal and often painful stories about their own healthcare woes.

Among them was Melissa, a member from Oregon, who wrote: "I'm currently over \$5,000 in debt due to an overnight hospital stay in November of 2007. My doctor sent me to the emergency room due to tachycardia, and the resulting tests and observation put me in a deep financial hole. Ironically, my employer of 17 years finally started offering its employees insurance, 6 weeks after my hospital stay." In her view, health coverage shouldn't "have anything to do with employment status, as that is unfair to employers and those unable to work. We need a national, single payer system which will eliminate the health insurance companies who are blood-sucking vampires doing nothing for our nation's health and everything for their own profit."

The survey—which was completed by union members as well as nonmembers—shows Melissa is far from

alone in dealing with the hardships of being uninsured. Among the findings:

In the past year, 76% of people who lack insurance themselves, and 71% of people with uninsured children, say someone in their family did not visit a doctor when sick because of cost.

Sixty seven % of the uninsured and 66 % of those whose children are uninsured report skipping medical treatment or follow-up care recommended by a doctor.

Fifty seven % of the uninsured and 61% of people with uninsured children had to choose between paying for medical care or prescriptions and other essential needs (such as the rent or mortgage and utilities).

Even those with health insurance (about 3/4 of those who responded) are deeply concerned about rising costs and declining quality. Some 96% of insured respondents say they worry about being able to afford coverage during the next few years. Currently, 94% say they are dissatisfied with the cost of their current coverage, and 62% say they are dissatisfied with their healthcare quality. In addition, more than half of those with coverage say it does not provide vital health services, such as prescription drugs, preventative care

and check-ups, or it makes those services unaffordable.

Gary, an AFT member in Florida, wrote: "The medical insurance deduction keeps going up, but the deals that my employer draws up with the insurance company provide inadequate coverage in an affordable price range. The insurance plan that I currently have is the worst that I've ever had. I pay a lot out-of-pocket."

Judith in Missouri worries about retiree coverage: "While I currently have health insurance through my employer, it seems that if I retire in a timely fashion, I will either be dependent upon Medicare or have to pay out a large sum of money to have full health coverage.... I can't retire until I just can't make it any more. The cost for my insurance would be about half of what my retirement income would be. That won't work."

Almost 80% of those surveyed say healthcare will be a major issue in the 2008 presidential and congressional campaigns, and 97 % say they plan to vote this fall.

"We have to help candidates who support real reform become active champions for healthcare," says AFL-CIO president John Sweeney. "

