



Date: Jan. 12, 2010

Action Alert: Full Senate to Vote on *Wisconsin Parity Act (SB-362)* in January

Contact Your Senator Today to Pass the *Wisconsin Parity Act!*

The Wisconsin Senate is preparing to vote on the *Wisconsin Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity Act (SB-362)*, possibly as early as Tuesday, Jan. 19.

The *Wisconsin Parity Act* is an important bill that will require most group health plans in Wisconsin to provide mental health and substance abuse disorder benefits at parity levels. This new law will increase treatment for hundreds of thousands of people in Wisconsin, saving lives and lowering costs. For more information on the legislation, visit www.ParityForWisconsin.org.



The *Wisconsin Parity Act* has passed both the Assembly Committee on Health and Health Care Reform (Dec. 17, by an 8-5 vote along party lines) and the Senate Committee on Health, Health Insurance, Privacy, Property Tax Relief, and Revenue (Dec. 22, by a 5-2 vote with bipartisan support). This is the first time that a parity bill has passed through committees in **both** houses of the Wisconsin Legislature.

Action Requested

Please call or email your State Senator **TODAY** and ask him or her to vote to pass the *Wisconsin Parity Act*. If you don't know who your State Senator is, visit www.legis.wisconsin.gov/w3asp/waml/waml.aspx

Suggested Message to Senators

These are just suggestions—it's best to use your own words and experiences:

I'm writing/calling as a constituent to ask that you vote to pass the *Wisconsin Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity Act (SB-362)* when it is introduced for a vote in the Senate.

—continued—

The Wisconsin Parity Act will provide equitable mental health and substance abuse treatment benefits for many of the 700,000 Wisconsin residents left uncovered by the federal *Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-343)*.

Research has repeatedly confirmed the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of treatment for persons with mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

The Wisconsin Parity Act will NOT lead to a substantial increase in premium costs. A March 4, 2008 study by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) of the law that became the *Wellstone-Domenici Act*—the most recent, authoritative, independent, expert analysis of parity’s economic impact on private-sector employers—found that parity would increase costs by less than one half of one percent of premium.

The Wisconsin Parity Act recognizes the concerns of small business. Using language consistent with federal guidelines as outlined in the federal *Wellstone-Domenici Act*, new amendments to the *Wisconsin Parity Act* will allow employers with fewer than 10 employees to opt out of the parity provision. The amendments also permit larger employers who can show that parity has increased their insurance costs by two percent, and then one percent in later plan years, to opt out as well.

Wisconsin’s small businesses cannot afford the costs of untreated mental illness and substance abuse. For a minimal investment, parity will save billions of dollars in reduced sick days, increased worker productivity and decreased health care costs.

For these reasons I ask that you vote to pass the *Wisconsin Parity Act*.

Wisconsin Senate Members

Each of the following five Senators voted “yes” on Dec. 22 as members of the Senate Committee on Health, Health Insurance, Privacy, Property Tax Relief, and Revenue. If you contact them, please thank them for their vote and ask for their continued support of this important legislation.

- **Sen. Jon Erpenbach, Chair (D-Waunakee)**, Sen.Erpenbach@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-6670
- **Sen. Tim Carpenter, Vice-Chair (D-Milwaukee)**, Sen.Carpenter@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-8535
- **Sen. Alberta Darling (R-River Hills)**, Sen.Darling@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5830
- **Sen. Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point)**, Sen.Lassa@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3123
- **Sen. Judith Robson (D-Beloit)**, Sen.Robson@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2253

The full Senate is:

- **Sen. Spencer Coggs (D-Milwaukee)**, Sen.Coggs@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2500
- **Sen. Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay)**, Sen.Cowles@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0484
- **Sen. Russell Decker (D-Schofield)**, Sen.Decker@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2502

- **Sen. Michael Ellis (R-Neenah)**, Sen.Ellis@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0718
- **Sen. Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau)**, Sen.Fitzgerald@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5660
- **Sen. Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend)**, Sen.Grothman@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7513
- **Sen. Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay)**, Sen.Hansen@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5670.
Sen. Hansen is a co-sponsor of the bill. If you contact him, please thank him for his leadership on this important issue.
- **Sen. Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls)**, Sen.Harsdorf@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7745
- **Sen. Jim Holperin (D-Conover)**, Sen.Holperin@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2509
- **Sen. Randy Hopper (R-Fond du Lac)**, Sen.Hopper@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5300
- **Sen. Robert Jauch (D-Poplar)**, Sen.Jauch@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3510
- **Sen. Ted Kanavas (R-Brookfield)**, Sen.Kanavas@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-9174
- **Sen. Dan Kapanke (R-LaCrosse)**, Sen.Kapanke@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5490
- **Sen. Neal Kedzie (R-Elkhorn)**, Sen.Kedzie@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2635
- **Sen. Pat Kreitlow (D-Chippewa Falls)**, Sen.Kreitlow@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7511
- **Sen. Alan Lasee (R-De Pere)**, Sen.Lasee@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3512
- **Sen. Mary Lazich (R-New Berlin)**, Sen.Lazich@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5400
- **Sen. John Lehman (D-Racine)**, Sen.Lehman@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1832
- **Sen. Joe Leibham (R-Sheboygan)**, Sen.Leibham@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2056
- **Sen. Mark Miller (D-Monona)**, Sen.Miller@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-9170
- **Sen. Luther Olsen (R-Ripon)**, Sen.Olsen@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0751
- **Sen. Jeffrey Plale (D-South Milwaukee)**, Sen.Plale@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7505
- **Sen. Fred Risser (D-Madison)**, Sen.Risser@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1627
- **Sen. Dale Schultz (R-Richland Center)**, Sen.Schultz@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0703
- **Sen. Jim Sullivan (D-Wauwatosa)**, Sen.Sullivan@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2512
- **Sen. Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee)**, Sen.Taylor@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5810
- **Sen. Kathleen Vinehout (D-Alma)**, Sen.Vinehout@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-8546
- **Sen. Robert Wirch (D-Pleasant Prairie)**, Sen.Wirch@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 267-8979