



Date: Feb. 8, 2010

Action Alert

Contact Your Representative to Vote to Pass the *Wisconsin Parity Act* (*Senate Substitute Amendment 1 to SB-362*)

Assembly May Vote on the *Wisconsin Parity Act* as Early as Feb. 22!

On Jan. 28 the Wisconsin Senate passed the *Wisconsin Parity Act* (*Senate Substitute Amendment 1 to SB-362*) by a 20-13 vote with strong bipartisan support. Now the legislation advances to the Assembly—which may vote on the bill as early as Tuesday, Feb. 22.

The *Wisconsin Parity Act* is an important bill that will provide mental health and substance abuse disorder insurance benefits at parity levels—equal to benefits for medical and surgical procedures—for 700,000 employees of Wisconsin's small businesses not covered by the federal *Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, P.L. 110-343*. For more information on the legislation, visit www.ParityForWisconsin.org.



Action Requested

Contact your Representative **TODAY** and tell him or her to pass the *Wisconsin Parity Act*. If you don't know who your Representative is, visit www.legis.wisconsin.gov/w3asp/waml/waml.aspx

Suggested Message to Representatives

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* (*Senate Substitute Amendment 1 to SB-362*) when it is introduced for a vote in the Assembly. As you may know, the *Wisconsin Parity Act* passed the Senate on Jan. 28 with strong bipartisan support.

With job creation Wisconsin's number one economic priority, the *Wisconsin Parity Act* will play an important role in helping our small businesses be more competitive. Parity provides an opportunity to improve both the mental AND physical health of workers, which can lead not only to lower healthcare costs but also improved employee productivity, saving Wisconsin businesses billions of dollars annually.

The *Wisconsin Parity Act* will NOT lead to a dramatic increase in healthcare costs. The most recent, authoritative, independent, expert analysis of the economic impact on private-sector employers of parity—conducted by the Congressional Budget Office and cited in federal regulations released Feb. 2 by the Departments of the Treasury, Labor, and Health and Human Services implementing the *Wellstone-Domenic Act*—concluded that insurance premium costs would increase by just four-tenths of one percent.

Parity may, in fact, reduce overall health care costs, which are routinely twice as high for people living with substance use disorders and mental health disorders. And numerous studies have shown parity to improve health outcomes for people with heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases.

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 complying with the parity provision for one plan year at a time. The amendments also permit larger employers who can show that parity has increased their insurance costs by two percent in the first year, and then one percent in later plan years, to opt out for one plan year at a time.

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

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

Wisconsin Assembly Members

Each of the following eight Representatives voted “yes” on Dec. 17 as members of the Assembly Committee on Health and Health Care Reform to advance the legislation to consideration by the full Assembly. If you contact them, please thank them for their vote and ask for their continued support of this important legislation.

- **Rep. Jon Richards** (D-Milwaukee), rep.richards@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0650
- **Rep. Chuck Benedict** (D-Beloit), rep.benedict@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-9967
- **Rep. Penny Bernard Schaber** (D-Appleton), rep.BernardSchaber@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3070
- **Rep. Sandy Pasch** (D-Whitefish Bay), rep.pasch@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7671.
Rep. Pasch is the lead sponsor of the bill. If you contact her, please be sure to thank her for her important leadership.
- **Rep. Kelda Helen Roys** (D-Madison), rep.roys@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5340
- **Rep. Donna Seidel** (D-Wausau), rep.seidel@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0654
- **Rep. Jennifer Shilling** (D-La Crosse), rep.shilling@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5780
- **Rep. Amy Sue Vruwink** (D-Milladore), rep.vruwink@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-8366

The full Assembly is:

- **Joan Ballweg** (R-Markesan), rep.ballweg@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-8077
- **Peter Barca** (D-Kenosha), rep.barca@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5504
- **Terese Berceau** (D-Madison), rep.berceau@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3784
- **Garey Bies** (R-Sister Bay), rep.bies@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5350
- **Spencer Black** (D-Madison), rep.black@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7521
- **Ed Brooks** (R-Reedsburg), rep.brooks@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-8531
- **Fred Clark** (D-Baraboo), rep.clark@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7746
- **Pedro Colon** (D-Milwaukee), rep.colon@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 267-7669
- **David Cullen** (D-Milwaukee), rep.cullen@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 267-9836
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- **Brett Davis** (R-Oregon), rep.davis@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1192
- **Kristen Dexter** (D-Eau Claire), rep.dexter@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-9172
- **Jason Fields** (D-Milwaukee), rep.fields@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3756
- **Jeff Fitzgerald** (R-Horicon), rep.fitzgerald@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2540
- **Donald Friske** (R-Merrill), rep.friske@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7694
- **Phil Garthwaite** (D-Fennimore), rep.garthwaite@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1170
- **Mark Gottlieb** (R-Port Washington), rep.gottlieb@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 267-2369
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- **Gary Hebl** (D-Sun Prairie), rep.hebl@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7678
- **Steve Hilgenberg** (D-Dodgeville), rep.hilgenberg@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-7502
- **Gordon Hintz** (D-Oshkosh), rep.hintz@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-2254
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- **Michael Huebsch** (R-West Salem), rep.huebsch@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-0631
- **Andy Jorgensen** (D-Ft. Atkinson), rep.jorgensen@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-3790
- **Dean Kaufert** (R-Neenah), rep.kaufert@legis.wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-5719
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