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Machinists Union Leaders Vote to Oppose Health Benefits Tax

The Executive Council of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) has voted unanimously to oppose any health care reform legislation that is funded by taxing the value of workers' existing health care benefits.

“For decades, IAM members exchanged substantial wage increases for the best possible health insurance,” said IAM President Tom Buffenbarger. “Now, in a bizarre turn of events, their insurance premiums will be subject to a forty percent excise tax if the Senate version of health care reform becomes law. Democratic leaders have the power to stop this travesty and I urge them to do so, quickly and completely.”

“IAM members are rightfully outraged over the bait and switch tactics at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue,” said Buffenbarger. “They were promised health care reform. Now they face health care deformed by backroom deals.”

No single issue brought more union members onto last year's campaign trail than Republican threats to tax health care benefits, and the Democrats' pledge to protect those benefits.

“Like NAFTA, the health care excise tax is an issue with the potential to reverberate for years,” said Buffenbarger. “Machinists have long memories. And they will long remember who taxed their benefits after pledging on the campaign trail not to do so.”