



**DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY HEALTH CARE SYMPOSIUM 2009**  
**SPOTLIGHTS HEALTH CARE REFORM DEBATES**

Washington, D.C., May 15, 2009, — Dialogue on Diversity's 2009 Health Care Symposium *Affordability and Equity: An End of All Exploring? Or Just the Beginning?* held this year on May 13<sup>th</sup> at the National Education Association in Washington, again brought together women entrepreneurs and the policy-conscious public- and private-sector executives and staff to hear and critique the expertise of a distinguished array of health care specialists. "Reform in the basic structure of the U.S. health care system appears to be at last in the works," Dialogue president **Ma. Cristina Caballero** commented. "But even before the broad gauge reform, relief for small entrepreneurs appears in prospect as well, setting to rights the uneven taxation of health insurance for individuals and small business owners vis-a-vis the employees of larger firms. Our 2009 Symposium should serve as the wake-up call for our own target audience of ethnic small business owners and, we hope, a source of useful ideas and counsel for a broader circle of policy-oriented professional and business types."

The day's program features remarks at the midday session by **Rep. Grace Napolitano** of California's 38<sup>th</sup> District, who was honored with Dialogue on Diversity's Legacy Award for her powerful advocacy in the causes of health and education and for her championing of federal support of mental health programs. Rep Napolitano, who has sought, during her decade in the Congress, to muster support for early and meaningful interventions for young persons, among whom the possibility of suicide has come to be alarmingly frequent, for armed forces members returning from distant battle theaters seriously impaired by psychological impacts, and for others whose mental functioning has cost billions in lost economic productivity, and in disastrous human anguish for families, fellow workers, and communities.

After greetings by N.E.A.'s Latina Outreach director **M. Rita Jaramillo, Jerald Newberry**, heading up the newly conceived Health Information Network (HIN) of the mammoth teachers' organization, described efforts to bring freshly presented information on a gamut of health challenges, driving the message home to both teachers and, through them, to students at all levels in schools around the country. HIN brings into focus everything from nutrition to AIDS to stress and its concomitant violence – the principle holds that health and a stable environment are the best catalyst for the teacher-student learning interaction.

The Symposium centerpiece was a two hour session on health care reform – the proposals, the prospects, and the stubborn underlying economic structures that so far have resisted private and desultory public-sector efforts to tame them. Panelists, all close students of the medical care system, reflected the range of views -- among them **Nina Owcharenko** of the conservative Heritage Foundation, **Karen Davenport** of the Center for American Progress, and **Stan Dorn** of the Urban Institute (who likened the repeatedly dashed high hopes of the health care community for reform to the annual dismay of Charlie Brown when Lucy once again jerks the football to the side). **Tevi D. Troy**, former Assistant HHS Secretary, now at the Hudson Institute, offered a critical and carefully nuanced account of the potential outcome-improving role of a régime of widely adopted information technology in the universe of medical practice. **Melissa Bishop-Murphy** of Pfizer, brought a carefully articulated commentary on the health care problem from the key perspective of that leading pharmaceutical producer.

In other Symposium highlights **Susan Scanlan**, Chair of the National Council of Women's Organizations, engaged a rapt lunchtime audience with the history of women's advances big time in the Washington political milieu. She was present at the creation as the newly formed women's caucus came on the scene, regaling her hearers with such anecdotes as the novice Sen. Barbara Mikulsky marching into the NIH with her accountant in tow and demanding to "see the books". Ultimately made available, they disclosed an alarming want of attention to the most elementary women's health issues. **Dr. Elena Rios**, Founder and President of the National Hispanic Medical Association, appeared as featured speaker at the Symposium's midday session, laying out the case chapter and verse for the training and nurturing of a numerous and vital corps of Hispanic medical professionals.

**Monica Villalta** of Kaiser Permanente, **Dr. José Ruales** of the Pan American Health Organization, and the President of Latinos for National Health Insurance, **Dr. Jaime Torres**, sketched the travails of the hemisphere's minority populations, persuasively concluding with an indictment of the prevailing system of patchwork, gap-riddled, and otherwise insufficient insurance coverage, opting instead for a system resembling Medicare for all. For the Symposium's afternoon session former PAHO Deputy Director **Dr. Cristina Beato**, along with **Trina Frazier** of the American Kidney Fund, led a roundtable discussion, *Understanding, Prevention, and Remedy*, a review of principal current health threats to the American population.

Along with the Symposium host N.E.A., 2009 program sponsors included Kaiser Permanente, pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, and Southwest Airlines.