



## HealthWatch Wisconsin Legislative

# ACTION ALERT

April 23, 2010

### WI Senate Does Not Vote on AB 878

#### Family Health Benefits Bill Killed by Procedural Move!!

On April 22, AB 878, the Family Health Benefits Bill, a Bill to promote the development of Health Benefits Counseling services statewide, was added to the Senate Calendar. On a routine, procedural motion, Sen. Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) objected to the Bill being read for a third time (all Bills are read three times before being voted on.) To overcome this objection, the Senate needed a supermajority vote--a 2/3 vote, to allow the Bill to be read. While we had the majority vote, we did not have a supermajority. Senator Fitzgerald killed the Family Health Benefits Bill with his objection. Please feel free to [contact the Senator](#) and let him know what you think of his tactics. (608-266-5660)

The outpouring of calls and support from so many of you was overwhelming! Thank you for contacting your Senator to encourage a vote to promote health benefits advocacy in Wisconsin! Senators heard stories of the families we all work with every day--those who have lost jobs, lost insurance, have a sudden illness, or are otherwise in need of assistance navigating confusing health care coverage systems.

Ignorant obstructionism will not stop our pursuit of a statewide family health benefits advocacy network. Stay tuned and stay active and vocal, and we promise to keep you informed of our progress!

### A Look at the Legislative Process

When AB 878 passed the WI Assembly, it had already been read three times in front of the full Assembly, followed by a vote. The Bill was then "messed" (sent) to the WI Senate. AB 878 was then read two times in front of the full Senate. It was after the second reading during a motion for permission to read the bill for a third time that Sen. Fitzgerald made his objection. This process of reading Bills three times is not unique to Wisconsin, but is still not very well known. Each reading comes with a new set of procedural rules. The following abbreviated excerpt from the [Wisconsin Blue Book](#) will give some context to the stages of reading a bill on the floor of the Assembly or Senate:

Each bill introduced must be read three times before the final passage.

**First Reading.** Traditionally, the "first reading" of a bill takes place when the clerk reads part of the proposal's title that briefly describes the subject matter of the bill, as for AB 878, it was: "relating to a grant for providing assistance to individuals to obtain and maintain health care benefits and making an appropriation."

**Second Reading.** Once a bill is scheduled for house action, the clerk gives it a second reading by title. The purpose of a second reading is to consider amendments. In many cases, the rules are suspended by unanimous consent or a two-thirds vote so that second and third readings can occur on the same legislative day.

**Third Reading.** The purpose of the third reading is to make a final decision on a proposal itself. After a third reading, the proposal is put to the floor for a vote with the following questions: "This bill, having been read 3 separate times, the question is, 'Shall the bill pass?'" Members can debate the bill's contents at this point, but it is not subject to amendment.

**The Vote.** When all members finish speaking they vote. A bill may pass on a voice vote, unless a roll call vote is required by the state constitution, by law or legislative rule, or by request of a prescribed number of members.

