

WCA Wine Dinner To Mark Health Insurance Reform Efforts

SUNDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2009

White Plains, NY - The Westchester County Association (WCA) will mark its significant progress and ongoing health insurance reform efforts at the 5th Annual Wine Dinner, to be held 6-9 pm, Thursday, September 24, at the Tappan Hill Mansion, Tarrytown.

The sold-out event will bring together members of the Suburban Healthcare Reform Alliance that the WCA helped to create to reform practices of the for-profit health insurance companies. The alliance comprises business leaders, hospitals and physician groups.

Congresswoman Nita M. Lowey, who is currently serving her 11th term in Congress representing the 18th District which includes most of Westchester and part of Rockland, will be honored for her leadership in advocating for a strong health system for New York and the United States.

WCA President William M. Mooney, Jr. said: "Congresswoman Lowey has been a great advocate for New York's healthcare system in Washington. With a strong focus on quality of care and biomedical research, she has successfully advocated for increased funding, especially in the areas of cancer research and treatment." He added: "The WCA takes great pride in joining representatives from the region's hospitals, physicians and other healthcare providers in thanking Congresswoman Lowey for the significant contributions she had made to enhance healthcare in our communities." Robert W. Amler, MD, VP Government Affairs, Dean and Professor of Public Health at New York Medical College, will present the award to Congresswoman Lowey.

New York State Assemblyman Adam T. Bradley will receive a special recognition award for his strong leadership in sponsoring health insurance reform legislation. During his seven-year tenure in the Assembly, he sponsored measures to require greater accountability and fair practices by the insurers. John Federspiel, Chairman, Northern Metropolitan Hospital Association and President, Hudson Valley Hospital Center, will present the award to Bradley.

Since 2004, the Wine Dinner has provided pivotal financial underpinning to help the WCA advance its health insurance reform agenda.

The WCA was instrumental in having a number of health insurance reform measures adopted by the state legislature that were signed into law by Governors Pataki, Spitzer and Paterson, resulting in benefits to businesses:

- 2006: Legislation signed to correct unethical 'market conduct' practices including requiring common coding by all insurers; limit to the retroactive audit period; and expedited credentialing of new physicians.
- 2007: Legislation signed to advance the rights of healthcare providers and consumers associated with managed care health plans, most notably limits to a health plan's ability to deny care that it had already preauthorized.
- 2008: Efforts of the Blue Ribbon Task Force spurred the NY State Insurance Department to reach a settlement with Oxford Helah Insurance that resulted in a \$50 million refund to about 37,000 small businesses in the NY metro area who were overcharged for their health insurance policies. Additionally, a briefing by members of the Task Force to State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo's staff helped launch an

investigation of the nation's largest health insurance companies that defraud consumers and healthcare providers by manipulating reimbursement rates.

- 2009: Major managed care bill signed by Governor Paterson. The bill protects consumers from being hit with unexpected healthcare fees, helps patients return home sooner, and forces health insurers to issue refunds or credits to businesses and policy holders when the insurer doesn't meet minimum expenditure percentages of premium dollars spent on healthcare services.

Mr. Mooney noted the critical role of the Wine Dinner sponsors: "Their invaluable support will make it possible for the WCA to advance its important advocacy agenda to continue bringing about meaningful reforms in the health insurance industry." The sponsors are Diamond: Optimum Lightpath; Champagne: ENT and Allergy Associates, LLP, New York Medical College, O'Connor Davies Munns & Dobbins, LLP, Westchester Medical Center; Merlot: Grayrock Memorials and Florist, UnitedHealthcare; Chardonnay: Polymedco, Inc., Rose Press, Inc., Tappan Hill/Abigail Kirsch Catering Relationships, TD Bank; Healthcare: Bons Secours Charity Health System, Health Quest, Hudson Valley Hospital, Lawrence Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, Northern Westchester Hospital Center, Phelps Memorial Hospital Center, Pinnacle Healthcare, Inc., Sound Shore Medical Center, Saint Joseph's Medical Center and White Plains Hospital Center.

The evening will begin with a cocktail reception, followed by a four-course menu and wine pairing by Abigail Kirsch Catering Relationships. WCA Chair Alfred B. DeBello will welcome the guests and Mooney will deliver the opening remarks.

Founded in 1950, The Westchester County Association is the preeminent business membership organization in Westchester. It is committed to business advocacy, economic vitality, and to providing a strong and clear voice for the interests of Westchester businesses on a regional, national and international level. Its three major objectives are economic development of the region, business development, and to provide access and interaction with key public and private sector individuals, agencies and organizations