



PRESS RELEASE

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**Record Numbers to March for their Human Right to Healthcare
Historic Rally in Vermont Expects Large Turnout on May 1st**

New York City/Montpelier -- A record number of Vermonters are expected to march for their human right to healthcare at a historic rally on Montpelier's State House on Friday, May 1. The rally is anticipated to draw national attention as one of the largest protests in the country in support of the human right to healthcare. Organized by the Vermont Workers' Center (VWC), the rally is part of their "Healthcare is a Human Right" campaign, which calls for the recognition that healthcare is a human right, not a commodity.

The rally has been endorsed by over 100 organizations, including the National Economic & Social Rights Initiative (NESRI), 25 faith leaders, and other national and state-based organizations. Small business owners and workers may close shop or call in sick to take part in the weekday rally. More than one out of four Vermonters has been without health insurance for part or all of the past two years,¹ despite the state's health care reform efforts. A survey conducted by the Vermont Workers' Center has shown that over 95% of Vermonters believe that healthcare is a human right.

Paul Farmer, founding director of Partners in Health and board member of NESRI, supports VWC's drive for the right to healthcare. "The ongoing struggle for the right to health care has always needed champions," said Dr. Farmer. "Remember Martin Luther King's Poor People's Movement? Remember the march on Washington? The Vermont Workers' Center is a vital member of this movement for health, working to ensure that all people get the health care they need regardless of their ability to pay. Some things are not meant to be commodities – they are meant to be rights."

The VWC's Healthcare is a Human Right campaign demands a healthcare system based on the principles of universality, equity and accountability. This would guarantee that everyone can get the healthcare they need, when and where they need it. By evoking these human rights principles, which reflect the commitment the United States made under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the campaign is building a large grassroots movement that seeks to change what is considered politically possible.

Stressing the national relevance of the Vermont rally, Anja Rudiger of NESRI's Human Right to Health program said: "Vermont's campaign has exposed that if healthcare is treated as a commodity, regulations are not enough to keep insurers from putting profits before people and denying care to growing sections of our population. With this historic rally the Vermont Workers' Center inspires us to hold our representatives accountable for violating our human right to healthcare."

ENDS

Vermont Workers' Center - <http://www.workerscenter.org/healthcare>
NESRI - <http://www.nesri.org/programs/health.html>
Partners in Health - <http://www.pih.org>

¹ <http://www.familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/americans-at-risk/vermont.pdf>