

### ***Long Islanders who struggled against their insurance companies will share their stories with Rep. Israel***

Washington, DC – On Friday, Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington) held a roundtable with victims of the health care status quo and discussed health care reform proposals. Participants included both insured and uninsured Long Islanders who have struggled to meet their health care needs in the current system.

“Lost in the sound bites from both sides in the debate over health care are the real victims of the health care status quo. I wanted to hear firsthand how they were denied coverage and fought battles against a system where profit comes before the quality of care,” said Rep. Israel.

Rep. Israel was joined by leaders from cancer advocacy organizations as well as constituents who turned to Rep. Israel’s office for help when they encountered insurance issues.

Kay Ingram of Holbrook, NY spoke of her ordeal as she tried to care for her daughter who was suffering from Crohn’s Disease. When her daughter’s medication was switched, the insurance company responsible for covering her new prescription began to delay. Several deliveries were scheduled and nothing ever came. All the while, Ms. Ingram’s daughter grew sicker. She called over and over again to sort out the issue and was told at one point that the insurance coverage had been terminated. “We were put on hold for 20 minutes at a time and I could sense that they were looking for a loophole,” Ingram said.

Carol Gordon of Massapequa, NY had a regular doctor for 20 years. When she lost her coverage she tried to go back to that same doctor. “I told them I would pay for the visit with cash, but then they asked who will pay for tests that the doctor may require, which could amount to over \$1,000,” Ms. Gordon said. Ultimately she had to seek care at her local emergency room.

Catherine Marquardt from North Babylon, NY was diagnosed with breast cancer earlier this year. She had hoped to have reconstructive surgery at the same time as her mastectomy, however her insurance company made it impossible for her to use her doctor for the surgery, then gave her a list of possible doctors – only one of whom actually performed the surgery she needed. After a long negotiation, and filing a complaint with the State of New York Insurance Department, she was finally given approval for her surgery. Immediately after she was sent a nearly \$70,000 bill as her insurance company attempted to deny her claims, saying she had a pre-existing condition. “The laws entitling women to reconstruction following mastectomy need to be amended to prevent insurers from denying access and payment to qualified breast reconstruction surgeons who perform this surgery in their local area hospitals if none exists in their network,” Ms. Marquardt said.

Congress is currently considering health insurance reform legislation. America’s Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 (H.R.3200) was introduced in the House of Representatives on July 14, 2009.