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Blues musicians unite again for health plan

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For the fourth consecutive year, blues, rock and soul musicians are joining forces to support a single-payer health care system in Oregon.

The Inner City Blues Festival takes place from 6 p.m. to midnight Saturday, April 11, at the Eagles North Portland Lodge, 7611 N. Exeter Ave.

Proceeds benefit the statewide coalition Health Care for All-Oregon to “get simple, fair, affordable, high-quality health care for all Oregonians,” according to press info.

Ken Cropper, a retired Portland area union organizer, notes that in 2017 all states will have the ability to opt out of the Affordable Care Act, aka Obamacare. Cropper and blues musician Norman Sylvester are part of a movement to make Oregon a single-payer state — in other words, the government pays our health bills — either through legislation or a ballot initiative.

Currently, Cropper says, HB 2828, a study bill in the Oregon House, and SB 631, the Health Care for All Oregon Act, address the single-payer issue. You can learn more about each bill, he says, by visiting hcao.org.

Cropper adds that one way or another, single-payer will be a major issue in the foreseeable future for Oregon.

In addition to Sylvester, performers include Billboard charting singer Andy Stokes, King Louie & Friends with singer LaRhonda Steele, singer-guitarist Tevis Hodge Jr., rock ‘n’ rollers The Strangetones with the lovely Volcano Vixens, samba band Bloco Alegria, blues storyteller Steve Cheseborough, harmonica maestro Bill Rhoades, guitarist Newel Briggs, guitarist and Steve Miller alumnus Jay “Bird” Koder, swing singer Richard Arnold, and pop, soul and R&B singer Sarah Billings.

The 2015 event also will honor the late Janice Scroggins, Mel Solomon, Linda Hornbuckle, Jim Miller, Lucinda Tate and Geneva Knauls for their community and music accomplishments.

Admission to the 21-and-older show is \$20, and tickets are available at Music Millennium, 3158 E. Burnside St., Geneva’s Shear Perfection, 5601 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., and Musicians Union Local 99, 325 N.E. 20th Ave. You also can purchase tickets online at www.tickettomato.com.

Cropper and Sylvester both agree Obamacare made things better for many folks, but “we still have people falling through the cracks,” Cropper says.

Sylvester adds that the application process can put off some people and others are choosing to pay the fine for not purchasing insurance rather than deal with the financial and filing hurdles.

“There should be a simpler way to get it,” Sylvester says of health insurance

