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**MEMBER HOSPITALS**

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of Long Island**

- **Good Samaritan  
Hospital Medical Center**  
West Islip
- **St. Catherine of Siena  
Medical Center**  
Smithtown
- **St. Charles Hospital**  
Port Jefferson

**East End Health Alliance**

- **Eastern Long Island  
Hospital**  
Greenport
- **Peconic Bay  
Medical Center**  
Riverhead
- **Southampton Hospital**  
Southampton

**Long Beach Medical Center**  
Long Beach

**John T. Mather  
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Stony Brook

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Northport

**Winthrop South Nassau  
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- **South Nassau  
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Oceanside
- **Winthrop-University  
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Mineola

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**Nassau-Suffolk  
Hospital Council, Inc.**

**A PUBLICATION ADDRESSING HEALTH  
ISSUES FACING LONG ISLANDERS**

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## Health Reform Challenge Continues

National health reform continues in Washington with the Senate Finance Committee's release (9/15/09) of its version of a reform bill. Three other congressional committees have already offered their versions of health reform legislation.

The Long Island hospital industry supports coverage of all Americans, reasonable plans to save Medicare/Medicaid costs, implementation of information technol-

ogy, and some sort of government sponsored insurance plan that stimulates competition, but is not tied to Medicare rates. Historically, in most cases, Medicare reimburses hospitals for less than the cost to provide the care and a public plan tied to such rates would be unsustainable for not-for-profit hospitals. This is particularly true on Long Island where labor and energy costs are significantly higher.

## Census Reveals Slight Increase in Uninsured

The recently released results of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009 Current Population Survey reveal that about 700,000 more individuals were without health insurance between 2007 and 2008 – still about 15.4 percent of the U.S. population. More telling is the data on household income (down 3.6 percent between 2007 – 2008) and the poverty rate now at 13.2 percent, up from 12.5 percent in 2007.

With less spending power to purchase insurance and now many Americans without jobs that provide health insurance, the recession's toll on health insurance cov-

erage and affordability is clearly troubling. The Census data show a decline in employer-provided health insurance, down from 64 percent in 2000 to 58.5 percent last year.

Census data has important federal funding implications for counties and states and influences public health planning priorities and allocation of resources. Accurate counting of the uninsured is also vital to the national health reform effort. The data also help local hospitals gauge a community's needs.

Long Island's percentage of

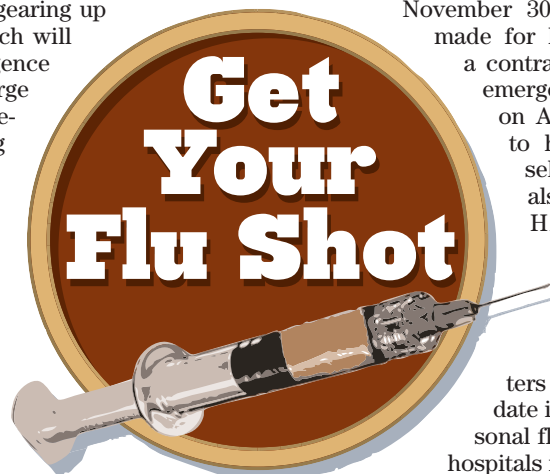
uninsured closely resembles the nation's average. In the Census Bureau's Small Area Health Insurance Estimates, a relatively new measurement tool that reaches down to the county level, Nassau posts an uninsured rate of 15.1 percent and Suffolk 14.1 percent.

The Census will soon release yet another survey, The American Community Survey, which will report even more detailed health insurance coverage for a sample size of about 3,000 people. This sample size is more than 10 times the size of other major surveys.

## Hospitals See Tough Flu Season Ahead

Long Island's hospitals are gearing up for this year's flu season, which will be intensified by the re-emergence of the H1N1 flu strain. They urge preventive measures such as frequent hand washing, covering coughs and prompt disposal of tissues, and staying home at the first sign of illness as the first line of defense against the H1N1 and seasonal flu viruses.

As additional defense, the New York State Department of Health has mandated that all hospital employees and volunteers who have direct contact with patients receive the seasonal flu vaccine by



November 30<sup>th</sup> each year. Exceptions are made for health care workers who have a contraindication to the vaccine. The emergency regulation went into effect on August 13, 2009. It also applies to health care personnel in other selected settings. The mandate also requires vaccination against H1N1, pending the timely shipment of the recently approved vaccine.

County health departments and the state health department as well as the Centers for Disease Control have up to date information about H1N1 and seasonal flu on their web sites, as do most hospitals in the region.