

The Health Care Crisis: A Moral and Economic Issue
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A. The problems in health care in the United States have reached crisis proportions

- 1. The crisis is undermining the nation's safety net.**
- 2. Unless we have comprehensive reform, our health care system cannot meet the needs of our citizens**
- 3. The moral issues involved are substantial**
- 4. Problems are having a major impact on our economy**
- 5. Increases in health care costs are eating into corporate margins; they suppress job creation and wage increases for current workers**
- 6. Undercut the viability of pension funds and offset increases in pension benefits for retirees**
- 7. Put the United States at a strong disadvantage in world markets in competing against companies that have much lower health care costs**
- 8. Producing severe long-term budgetary problems for federal and state deficits**
- 9. A recent study report that almost one-half of all bankruptcies filed in this country result from medical expenses.**

B. Dimensions of the Problems

- 1. Total health expenditures are \$1.7 trillion and are projected to reach \$2.751 trillion by 2010**
- 2. We spend twice as much on health care as does any other developed country, and yet our outcomes are no better – and in some measures, worse**

C. The crisis in our health care system = 3 closely related problems

- 1. Costs -- health insurance premiums have been experiencing double-digit rates of increase over the past several years – they are rising at more than 4 times the rate of general inflation**

The premium for the average employer-sponsored health insurance plan for a family of four is over \$9,000 this year and we project that it will rise to over \$14,500 by 2006 – that is more than a doubling in just 5 years

- 2. Coverage – as costs increase, more people become uninsured**

Our country is concerned about values, and rightfully so.

What does it say about our values that 45 million people in this country have no health insurance?

The current 45 million uninsured will increase to more than 51 million in 2006

About 2 million are being added each year to the uninsured, many of them from the middle class

As costs of health insurance have increased, employers have cut back or dropped health insurance for their employees – shifting a greater share of the premium cost and increasing deductibles and co-pays

Many employees in firms that offer health insurance can no longer afford this increased out-of-pocket expense and go without insurance

Many of the insured are only a job loss away from being uninsured

- 3. Quality -- The quality of care in this country is very uneven. There is too much care, too little care, and the wrong care throughout the system – in our most prestigious medical centers and in our community institutions**

Millions of injuries and hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths that occur each year result from substandard medicine.

- 4. Incremental, patchwork measures cannot do the job – we need system-wide, comprehensive reform.**
- 5. Medical savings accounts, tax credits, consumer-driven health plans are not adequate to solve the problems**

- 6. Neither can we depend upon the competitive marketplace to solve the problems – it hasn't worked in the last 50 years and the competitive marketplace has become less and less competitive with the consolidation of providers and insurers**

D. Impact of the crisis on the economy – in addition

- 1. Corporations in which savings are invested are becoming less profitable because of their health care costs**
- 2. Retirees have to spend more and more of their income on health care – reducing the money they have available to meet other needs**

E. Polls indicate that the public is becoming increasingly concerned about the health care system

- 1. In a poll released just yesterday, more Americans are personally more worried about health care costs than about losing their job, paying their rent or mortgage, losing money in the stock market, or being a victim of a terrorist attack.**

F. National Coalition on Health Care

- 1. Nation's largest and most broadly based. non-partisan, non-profit alliance working to reform our health care system**
- 2. Our 95 members include the United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society, large corporations, the major labor unions, provider, consumer, other religious organizations, insurers, and the country's largest health and pension funds.**
- 3. Our members see the National Coalition as a mechanism to influence public policy in a very positive way. The strength and leverage of our members – who employ or represent over 150 million Americans -- give us the means to bring the case for health system reform to our elected officials, policymakers, and the public.**

G. And what are the activities we are undertaking toward that goal?

- 1. Specifications for comprehensive reform -- have developed criteria which constitute a mechanism for looking at various options for reform**

2. We are not developing a plan that says “This is what you must do”, but rather saying “If you are going to fix the system, there are only so many ways to do so, and here are criteria against which to view the viability and workability of various proposals”
3. We are commenting on proposals that are on the table – supporting those we believe get us toward our goals and pointing out the shortfalls of those which don’t .
4. We are working to increase awareness of our health care problems and to encourage the public to make their concerns known to their elected officials.

H. What can the members of your organization do?

1. You can educate and mobilize your members to understand the need for reform and why they should support it
2. No better group to point out the moral and ethical issues involved.
3. Encourage your elected officials to become involved in health care issues
4. Use your political leverage, resources, and grassroots outreach to bear to achieve comprehensive health system reform

I. Conclusion

- a. We have the opportunity to make a difference, and the time is right to pursue the reforms that will enable all Americans to have access to affordable, quality health care.