

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

July/August 2009



UN Millennium Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

HEALTH CARE REFORM: THE GREAT DEBATE

As people of faith, we cannot just watch from the sidelines as the important debate on healthcare reform is taking place. We have an opportunity to engage in this debate based on our faith values, and our commitment to “advocate for the poor and needy, especially families.” The following information may be helpful as we study the issues, and engage in the health care debate based on the values we profess.



As health care costs skyrocket, more and more families are finding it difficult to get the health care they need. Even those with health coverage are delaying care because of costs. According to the Institute of Medicine, 18,000 people in our nation still die each year unnecessarily because they lack affordable health coverage.

Catholic Social teaching affirms that “every individual is entitled to a life of dignity and opportunity. Accordingly, access to health care is a basic human right.” (Faithful Citizenship – U.S. Catholic Bishops)



Scripture does not outline specific public policies around the provision of health care, but it does call for protecting the health of each person is an important personal and communal responsibility for people of faith.

VALUES-BASED APPROACH

People of faith may never agree on every aspect of health care reform, but there are guiding principles on which there is broad agreement within the faith community:

1. **Affordability:** Healthcare must be affordable for all families. Reform must include limits on out of pocket expenses in proportion to income and guarantee comprehensive benefits sufficient to maintain and promote good health.
2. **Coverage:** Health care reform must cover all Americans.
3. **Stewardship:** The cost of reform must be broadly shared and placed on a sustainable funding foundation.
4. **Protecting the poor:** Lower-income children and families must be protected.
5. **Religious liberty:** Reform legislation must respect religious liberty and the values of health care providers.



UNDERSTANDING THE PLANS FOR REFORM

Here are three major principles being debated in Congress that are especially important to families.

1. People who have coverage they like can keep it. Everyone would have a choice to purchase private health insurance, or to choose a quality public insurance option.
2. People who are uninsured or have lost their coverage would have a guaranteed ability to purchase affordable coverage through income subsidies. No one could be denied coverage or discriminated against by insurers because they are sick or have pre-existing conditions.
3. Long-term health care costs would be reduced by covering everyone and by creating stronger incentives for preventing illness and improving the quality of care.



WHAT CAN WE DO TO INFLUENCE THE DEBATE

Educate yourself. There is quite a bit of information on Health Care reform that can be found on a number of websites. Two websites that are very helpful from a faith perspective are www.networklobby.org and www.coverallfamilies.org

Contact your members in Congress and the Senate. The above websites include links to your members of Congress and the Senate. In some cases the letter is already formulated, and all you need to do is put in your name and address.

WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO HELP SHAPE A BETTER HEALTH CARE SYSTEM FROM WHICH EVERYONE WOULD BENEFIT.

The Peace and Justice Committee will continue to keep you updated on this issue and periodically suggest targeted actions to ensure health care reform is just and fair for all, especially the poor.

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AUGUST DATES TO CELEBRATE



August 6: Hiroshima Day - “NO NUKES DAY,” Anniversary of the Dropping of the Atomic Bomb. Go to www.betterworldcalendar.com and click on the month of August. Click on August 6th and play the “Peace Doves” game. Have fun while being educated.

August 23: International Day for the Remembrance of Slave Trade and Its Abolition. Go to www.anti-slavery.org: No Slavery-No Exceptions. **Sign the pledge.**



August 26: Women’s Equality Day

“How important it is to celebrate our heroes and **she-roes!**”
-- Maya Angelou

Prepared by the Peace and Justice Committee