



A Media Release
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American Healthcare: Who Says We Need Change?

Orlando, Florida

It's been said Americans love progress but hate change. Well first can we agree that progress is needed?

The United States spends more per person than any other system. As a nation, we are spending \$1 out of every \$6 we earn on health care. That's 15% of GNP compared with 8 to 10% of our western neighbors in Europe. That's almost twice as much as Canada which pays for healthcare for everyone in the country. And this huge cost is not only buckling our government and our businesses, it's buckling us! The high costs are crippling our ability to compete in the global market and our ability to rebound from this recession. Difficulty covering health insurance is a major barrier to businesses hiring more employees. Insurance companies dominating in key markets cherry-pick their patients- seeking to insure only the healthiest, those least likely to need health care.

Today, medical costs are the cause of over 62% of personal bankruptcies in the U.S. Recently our family was charged \$11,000 for one overnight in the hospital -bed only, for my son. As I stared in shock at the bill, it brought home how out of reach care is for those not fortunate enough to have adequate insurance when disaster strikes. With 47 million uninsured, and many more underinsured who cannot pay the huge deductibles and copays, we cannot be a competitive nation. Health care costs increased 120% in the past ten years, while general inflation was 29%. The average annual cost of health insurance today for a family of four is \$16,700. Meaningful health care reform is a fiscal imperative for our families, our business and our economy.

And what do our high costs get us? As a nation, we pay more and get less. Our life expectancy--an indicator of health and the health care system-- is shorter than the life expectancy in at least 30 other nations, including England, Canada, and Japan. Our health care system gives us a life expectancy comparable to that of Costa Rica and Cuba. In a

nutshell, America has too many people uninsured, too many people without access to timely preventive care, and too many people using expensive emergency health care especially for conditions which could have been addressed earlier with less costly primary care.

Health reform is needed. The first hurdle is having a meaningful, factual discussion on the issue, without fear mongering. We can pay for it, as a priority, with savings of almost one trillion dollars from redesigning where we are spending our medical dollars. We pay too much now in administrative costs (10-25% of the national health care bill), lack of access to primary care (10% of all costly hospitalizations), and unnecessary care driven by fee for service incentives. We are already paying, but we are paying too much, too late, on the wrong sides of the health equation.

The League of Women Voters believes that quality, affordable health care should be available to all U.S. residents. If Congress passes reform that does not tackle the problems of excessive administrative spending and unnecessary care, major revisions will be required in the future. America *is* capable of solving the challenge: providing access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents while controlling costs.

Reform of this broken system necessitates a public option. Medicare, Tricare (for military) and the Veteran's Administration are examples of public health care, available for targeted segments of the population, with high levels of satisfaction. The public option creates access to coverage to those whom the insurance companies have tried to avoid -- those who need care the most because of preexisting conditions. The public option is the best chance we have to control costs, provide options to private plans, and improve the overall health of our nation.

What can you do? Get the facts. Find out what's working around the world, and let's fashion a system that can one day be studied by others as one that works for all in a cost efficient and humane manner.

For an in-depth analysis of Myths and Facts to help you become more informed, visit www.TheFloridaVoter.org

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