

# Better Health Care Together

A Common Sense Approach to Health Care

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America's health care system is broken. The traditional employer-based model of coverage in its current form is endangered without substantial reform to our health care system. It is being crushed by out of control costs, the pressures of the global economy, and the large and growing number of uninsured. Soaring health costs threaten workers' livelihoods and companies' competitiveness, and undermine the security that individuals of a prosperous nation should enjoy. We can only solve these problems – and deliver health care that is high quality, affordable, accessible and secure – if business, government, labor, the health care delivery system and the nonprofit sector work together.

Health care security is vital to the nation. We are convinced that this debate must extend beyond Washington DC and engage communities across the country. We come together to offer some common sense principles that might serve as a basis for a conversation on forging a new American health care system by 2012. We hope these ideas might serve as a rallying point for concerned citizens and civic leaders as this national dialogue moves forward.

## COMMON SENSE PRINCIPLES FOR ACHIEVING A NEW AMERICAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM BY 2012

**We believe every person in America must have quality, affordable health insurance coverage.** The fact that 47 million of our neighbors lack health insurance is a national disgrace. No person in America should be forced to forgo essential care, or to face bankruptcy because of basic health care costs. Too many Americans are at risk of spending too high a portion of their income on necessary health care – either because they become sick, or because health costs are increasing faster than inflation.

**We believe individuals have a responsibility to maintain and protect their health.** People must have access to the information and tools they need to lead healthy lives, including coverage for preventive care and disease management. But in a reformed system, it is also fair to expect that people take care of themselves as best they can, given that others are asked to share the cost of illness when it occurs.

**We believe that America must dramatically improve the value it receives for every health care dollar.** The U.S. now spends far more than other advanced nations with far less to show for it in terms of health outcomes. We believe that such policies as implementing electronic medical records, aligning payment policy with quality and effectiveness, and pooling purchasing power to drive improvements in the health care system can help advance this agenda. Giving consumers more comparative information and a greater role and responsibility in their health care spending decisions is an important step toward improving system-wide value. More broadly, we believe it is a national imperative to mount a major effort to slow the growth of health costs even while expanding access, improving quality and assuring continued innovation. All evidence suggests this is possible; it is time to unleash the creativity of American business, labor unions, the nonprofit sector, government and health care workers to make it happen.

**We believe that businesses, governments, and individuals all should contribute to managing and financing a new American health care system.** For millions of American workers, the foundation of a new American system should no longer be businesses alone. People must have access to affordable group coverage independent of any employment relationship. Employers and unions must have the option of affordable, quality coverage that makes sense for them. Government must play a stronger role in ensuring the availability of affordable, quality health coverage. Financing seamless coverage under such a system should be a shared responsibility. We believe it is not in America's economic interest to have a disproportionate share of health care costs borne by business and workers – this hurts wages, job creation and global competitiveness. All Americans share the need for a health care system that promotes both the health of the nation and the vibrancy of our economy.

These principles must be in place by 2012. Beyond these principles, we believe getting serious about health care reform will require a new kind of debate. We urge policy makers to move past traditional habits and to adopt systemic, rather than piecemeal, reforms.

We recognize that these principles are a first step and that as others enter this dialogue they may be refined and augmented. We're committed to invest our time and resources to advance these principles, and urge other business and civic leaders to join us.

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