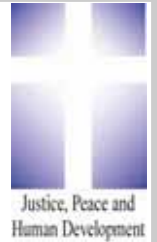




Action Alert!

Reform Health Care & Protect Human Life and Dignity
July 17, 2009



“Our approach to health care is shaped by a simple but fundamental principle: ‘Every person has a right to adequate health care. This right flows from the sanctity of human life and the dignity that belongs to all human persons, who are made in the image of God.’”

U.S. Catholic Bishops, A Framework for Comprehensive Health Care Reform: Protecting Human Life, Promoting Human Dignity, Pursuing the Common Good (1993)



Brief Update: Congress has begun considering health care reform legislation. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension (HELP) Committee voted on a bill this week after rejecting amendments to address concerns on abortion conscience protections. The Tri-Committee (the House Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Education and Labor Committees) debated and is voting on their bill. We expect many amendments to be offered in Energy and Commerce addressing concerns with abortion and conscience protection. The Senate Finance Committee may introduce a bi-partisan health care reform bill next week. Your help is needed to tell your congresspersons what to include in—and keep out of—health care reform (see specific asks below).

Catholic Social Teaching and Health Care

In our Catholic tradition, health care is a basic human right. Access to health care should not depend on where a person works, how much a family earns, or where a person lives. Instead, every person, created in the image and likeness of God, has a right to life and to those things necessary to sustain life, including affordable, quality health care. This teaching is rooted in the biblical call to heal the sick and to serve "the least of these," our concern for human life and dignity, and the principle of the common good. Unfortunately, tens of millions of Americans do not have health insurance. According to the Catholic bishops of the United States, the current health care system is in need of fundamental reform. To learn about Catholic teaching on health care in more detail, read the full statement by the United States Catholic Bishops, *A Framework for Comprehensive Health Care Reform*, at usccb.org/sdwp/national/comphealth.shtml.

How You Can Respond

Call Members of Congress now (find your Representative and Senators at house.gov and senate.gov; Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121) and tell them health care reform should:

- ⇒ Include health care coverage for all people from conception until natural death;
- ⇒ Continue the federal ban on funding for abortions and reject any mandate for abortion coverage or access to abortion;
- ⇒ Include access for all with a special concern for the poor and vulnerable and support inclusion for legal immigrants;
- ⇒ Preserve pluralism, including freedom of conscience for providers, health care workers and patients; and
- ⇒ Restrain costs and apply costs equitably among payers.



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Prayer for the Uninsured

Father of goodness and love,
Hear our prayers for the uninsured
members of our community and for all
who are in need.

For those who seek care but find that it is
out of reach, may they find consolation in
your healing presence.

For all who are blessed with health and
security, may they strive to fulfill the
needs of those who are sick and insecure.

For leaders who make decisions that affect
the health and well-being of others, may
they work to ensure the fundamental right
to health care.

We ask this through Christ our Lord who
healed those who believed.
Amen.

How One Community Responded

Of the 46 million Americans currently
without access to health care, over a
million live in Tennessee. Recognizing
that access to health care is a major
obstacle for too many people in their
state, concerned citizens have
worked to address this issue through
the Tennessee Health Care Campaign
(THCC), an organization which
receives funding from the Catholic
Campaign for Human Development
(CCHD).



One THCC victory was
expanded coverage for
children.

THCC empowers those without access to health care to
advocate for expanded and improved health care.
Recent victories have included greater coverage for
children, assistance for low-income persons, and
improvements in patients' rights in hospitals.

Facts about the Uninsured

- One out of three Americans under the age of 65 went without health insurance for some period of time during 2007 and 2008. Of these, four out of five were from working families.
- Sixty-four percent of the uninsured are employed full-time, year-round.
- An estimated 14,000 persons a day are now losing coverage as a result of the recession.²
- The poor are more likely to be uninsured. Thirty-four percent of non-elderly persons below the poverty line are uninsured, compared to 21 percent of non-elderly persons earning two to three times the poverty line.⁶

Sources: ^{1,3,5}U.S. Census Bureau, 2008; ²Center for American Progress, 2009; ⁶Employee Benefit Research Institute estimates from the March Current Population Survey, 2007 Supplement.

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