



Health Reform: A Top Priority for Policy Makers

November 9, 2006

One of the most serious challenges facing the nation is its fundamentally broken health care system. Nearly 47 million Americans do not have health coverage, while four out of five uninsured Americans live in working families. Health premiums have increased more than four times faster than wages. And American businesses are forced to choose between providing health benefits or jobs. These problems can only be addressed through major health reform.

To address this crisis, the Center for American Progress and the Center for American Progress Action Fund have launched a multi-faceted health initiative, with the goal of promoting health advocacy and raising the saliency of health reform in the 2006 and 2008 elections. In 2005, we produced a plan that provides affordable, quality health care for all Americans. In the plan, we identified concrete, immediate steps to set the country on the path toward a seamless, value-oriented health system. We will continue to develop these policies, starting with policies on prevention. Communications is also a critical component of this initiative. In January 2006, CAP and Americans for Health Care released national polling data regarding health reform, a “tool kit,” and set of messages to encourage debate. Our message on health reform is simple:

- The health care system in our country is broken, and we need to make fundamental changes.
- It’s just wrong for anyone who works hard, pays taxes, and plays by the rules to go without decent health care or to be driven into economic hardship because of health cost.
- In a system where everybody benefits from health coverage, everyone should help pay for it and share responsibility for health care cost.

Four bedrock principles of real reform include:

- Provide affordable coverage for all Americans
- Control health care costs
- Guarantee choice of doctors and health plans
- Make prevention a national priority

This message was used, and health concerns mattered in 2006.

NEWLY-ELECTED SENATORS

Bob Casey, Senator-Elect, Pennsylvania: “With costs rising out of control and health care coverage declining, the health care system in our country is broken, and we need to make fundamental changes.” “My health care coverage plan rests on four bedrock principles: First, affordable coverage for all Americans; second, maintaining your choice of doctors and plans; third, controlling costs; and fourth, expanding preventive care.” (speech, campaign website, last viewed 11/6/06)

Jon Tester, Senator-Elect, Montana: “Our current system isn’t working very well. It’s broken. We need to look at all possible solutions and work hard in a bi-partisan manner to give Ameri-

cans a healthcare program that is affordable, has cost controls, provides choices for patients and a strong prevention program.” (*The Laurel Outlook*, 9/13/06)

Sherrod Brown, Senator-Elect, Ohio: “Health coverage is eroding; health care costs are spiraling upward. It is a lethal combination and a vicious cycle...For individuals and families a lack of health insurance is a financial disaster waiting to happen...For the nation as a whole, it is a drag on our potential.” (speech, 9/13/06)

Amy Klobuchar, Senator-Elect, Minnesota: “Health care policy in our country needs an overhaul. Too much money is spent on paper pushing, instead of care from doctors and nurses.... Too many people don’t have health insurance... and too many people don’t have affordable options when they lose their jobs or start their own businesses.” “We need to work together to find immediate solutions to reduce the cost of health care and provide health services to all Americans.” (*Press Release* 7/24/06 and *The Associated Press State & Local Wire* 11/3/06)

Sheldon Whitehouse, Senator-Elect, Rhode Island: “My number one priority in the United States Senate will be to take on the special interests and create a better health care system. We need comprehensive reform to lower costs, provide all families with insurance, and improve our health and medical treatment.” (campaign website, viewed 10/27/06)

Ben Cardin, Senator-Elect, Maryland: “I believe the most urgent problem facing our communities is our broken health-care system. It is a disgrace that more than 45 million Americans have no health insurance.” (*The Washington Post*, 8/31/06) “We’re going to fight so that every family in Maryland and in the nation has quality, affordable health care – that’s our priority.” (acceptance speech, 11/7/06)

***James Webb**, Senator-Elect, Virginia: “The battle we are in right now is the most important of my life...We need a new direction on issues like making healthcare and college more affordable.” (television advertisement, 11/6/06)

Bernie Sanders, Senator-Elect, Vermont: “In the United States of America health care must be a right for every man, woman, and child and not just a privilege.” (television advertisement)

NEWLY-ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Bruce Braley, U.S. Congress, Iowa Congressional District 1: “It is time to expand access to healthcare to all Americans.” (campaign website, last viewed 10/26/06).

Joe Donnelly, U.S. Congress, Indiana Congressional District 2: “Forty-five million Americans do not have health insurance, and surely we can do better than that. I will stand up to the big drug and pharmaceutical companies and be a voice for the working people who deserve affordable health care.” (*Journal and Courier*, 10/27/06)

Keith Ellison, U.S. Congress, Minnesota Congressional District 5: “The emphasis for me is on the people, how to mobilize the people, how to persuade them to vote in their own best interests...how to argue that we have to fix this broken health care system that we have.” (*USA Today*, 9/14/06)

Zack Space, U.S. Congress, Ohio Congressional District 18: “We can begin to address the problem through the eventual implementation of a policy guaranteeing adequate health care for every American.” (campaign website, last viewed 9/11/06)

Gabriella Gifford, U.S. Congress, Arizona Congressional District 8: “As a legislator Gabrielle Giffords fought to expand health coverage for young and old. In Congress, she’ll take on drug and insurance companies to lower prices, work to cover every child, and open the door to affordable health care to everyone not just a few ...‘when it comes to health care, change can’t wait.’” (television advertisement)

Ed Perlmutter, U.S. Congress, Colorado Congressional District 7: “Our healthcare system is broken and is need of a major overhaul. We need a change in leadership to get this done.” (campaign website, last viewed 9/25/06)

John Yarmuth, U.S. Congress, Kentucky, Congressional District 3: “We have a moral obligation as a nation to ensure that every citizen has access to quality, affordable health care.” (campaign website, last viewed 11/06/06)

Heath Shuler, U.S. Congress, North Carolina, Congressional District 11: “It’s not right when big insurance companies write healthcare laws and millions can’t afford to see a doctor.” (television advertisement)

PUBLIC OPINION

“79% of respondents would approve of efforts to expand health insurance to the uninsured.”
USA Today Poll, 10/26/06

“Health care ranks second as the issue that ‘will matter most to [Ohioans] when they decide on how to vote in the race for U.S. Senate.’” *The New York Times/CBS News Poll*, 10/17/06

“Missouri is one state where health care topped Iraq among voters concerns...Maryland voters ranked Iraq the top issue, followed by health care and terrorism.” *The State.com*, 10/2/06

In Rhode Island, health care is the number two issue in the state, while Iraq is the top issue.
Knight Ridder Washington Bureau - McClatchy-MSNBC Poll, 11/5/06

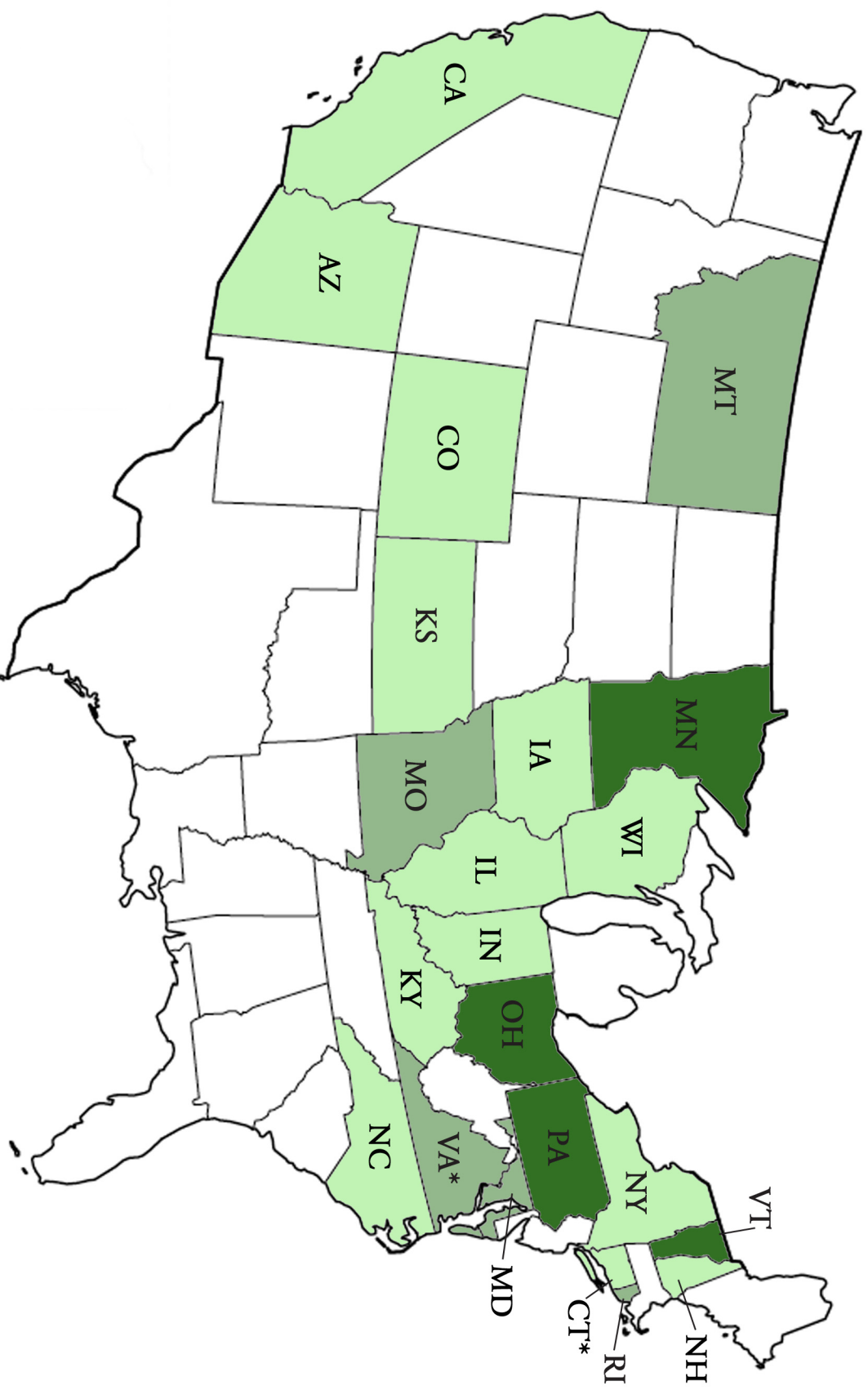
“While 21 percent of those surveyed in the recent poll ranked Iraq as their top issue, 18 percent [of Tennesseans] said health care.” *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, 11/5/06.

“But the polls reveal that the public’s anger over the administration’s policies in Iraq, and concern about illegal immigration and health care, has nationalized the election.” *The New York Times*, 11/5/06

* Pending final results (as of 12:30 pm 11/8/2006)

Challengers Who Made Healthcare a Priority

November 2006



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