

# Americans *for* Health Care

a project of SEIU

## Presidential Candidate Shadowing Kit



**2007-2008**

SEIU/Americans for Health Care  
1800 Massachusetts Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
[www.ImAHealthCareVoter.org](http://www.ImAHealthCareVoter.org)

## What is Americans for Health Care?

Americans for Health Care – a project of SEIU, the largest union of health care workers in the country – is uniting working families, small business owners, seniors, health care workers, community leaders, and policy makers to fight for quality, affordable health care that we can all count on. In states across the country – with nearly 500,000 health care voters – we are building broad-based coalitions of individuals and organizations in order to advocate for comprehensive health care solutions.

Following up on many state-based successes, Americans for Health Care in 2006 began focusing on “Raising the National Voice on Health Care.” By *nationalizing our efforts* we can further nationalize the health care reform agenda.

Americans for Health Care will be involved in the presidential campaign like never before, making sure voters and candidates make comprehensive health care reform a top priority.

***We're geared up and ready to go!***

**Iowa for Health Care** is mobilizing 20,000 Health Care Voters and nurses to make sure health care is a central issue in the caucuses.

**New Hampshire for Health Care** is shining the spotlight on working families' health care needs by activating more than 60,000 Health Care Voters in the primary.

**Nevada for Health Care** is making sure that quality, affordable health care for everyone is first on the agenda in the caucuses.

**South Carolina for Health Care** is working to help end health disparities, while making health care a top issue among voters and candidates.

**Colorado for Health Care** and its 19,000 Health Care Voters are gearing up to have a strong presence at the Convention in Denver and in the general election.

**Oregonians for Health Security** is pushing for state reform that will make a difference and promote national reform.

And as we get closer to the 2008 election, we will be in battleground states across the country.

**With your help, Americans for Health Care is going to *make health care the #1 issue* in the 2008 presidential campaign!**

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## Tips for Health Care Voters At Candidate Events

1. **Represent yourself!** Wear a "health care voter" sticker or t-shirt.
2. **Introduce yourself!** Sign in at the event and let the event organizers know who you are. Even if you don't know many people there, be sure to mingle and let people know that you are there to hear what the candidate has to say about health care.
3. **Get up front!** Position yourself up front and close to where the candidate will be speaking - that way it's hard to ignore you.
4. **Listen!** Listen to the candidate's stump speech politely. Take notes on their remarks on health care.
5. **Ask a Question!** We've included some sample questions in this packet to arm you with some facts. Ask your health care question and be sure to identify yourself as a "health care voter."
6. **Thank the candidate.** When the Q&A is over, make sure you have introduced yourself to the candidate and thank them for answering your question on the health care issue.
7. **Congratulate yourself on a job well done!** There are nearly 46 million Americans with no health insurance. It's our job to represent them in the fight for quality, affordable health care.

\*\*Even if you've already declared your support for one candidate, while you are participating in an event for Americans for Health Care we ask that you remain unbiased. \*\*

**Americans for Health Care Does Not Endorse Any  
Individual Candidate or Party.**

# Americans for Health Care

## Questions for Presidential Candidates

1. As president, will you make health care your top priority? Will you have a plan for how to address our nation's health care crisis?
2. People have talked about fixing our health care crisis for a LONG time, but nothing seems to happen. If elected president, what strategy do you have to pass real health care reform?
3. Many of the people I talk to are really concerned about rising health care costs. At the same time we know that we can't sacrifice quality for cost. How would you work to lower health care costs while protecting high quality patient care?
4. Over 46 million Americans are uninsured. This is a serious crisis. If elected president would you work toward the goal of eventually getting everyone in America covered?
5. Eight out of 10 of the uninsured are from working families. How would you involve employers in being part of the solution to our nation's health care crisis?
6. How many people would your health care plan cover? If it's not everyone, how do you plan to eventually cover everyone?
7. How would you help small businesses afford health insurance for their employees?
8. How would you help people who lose their jobs get coverage while they look for a new job? Would you help make health care more available to part-time workers?
9. If you are elected president would you work to pass comprehensive national health care reform?
10. What do you think are the 3 biggest problems with the health care system in the U.S. today?
11. Many older Americans have had serious problems with getting their prescriptions with Medicare Part D. What do you think about this program? As president, how would you fix it?
12. Do you believe in a health care system that requires minimum standards? Besides from preventive and hospital care, what services should a health plan cover?
13. What kind of national health care reform do you think is realistic and politically feasible?

## **When You Are Asked a Question: Find Answers in Our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

Since you'll be talking to candidates with differing points of view, some of them may ask you questions about Americans for Health Care or your ideas for health care reform. Here are some FAQs that can help you respond.

### **Are you calling for socialized medicine/single payer insurance health care?**

We are calling on our policy makers to start working with consumers, employers, health care providers – everyone who is affected by these high health care costs – to develop workable plans that make quality health care more affordable for everyone. The reality is we need to bring everyone to the table in order to create real solutions to the health care crisis.

### **Who is paying for this project/who is behind this?**

Americans for Health Care is a coalition of working families, small business owners, seniors, community leaders, and health care professionals who are concerned about the skyrocketing cost of health care. We're a project of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the nation's largest health care union.

### **Why are you focusing on federal races and not state races? Haven't you been focused on state change?**

It's going to take federal leadership for there to be real, comprehensive reform of our health care system. Incremental changes and band-aid solutions will ultimately not solve our nation's health care crisis.

### **Will Americans for Health Care endorse a specific health care plan?**

Any real health care reform must come from a team – business, working people, and elected officials – that will tackle the crisis and develop a new American solution that ensures:

- Lower, more stable costs for employers and employees
- Quality coverage for all
- Choice of doctors and plans
- A national focus on prevention

We're not advocating any one plan. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to this problem. We're using our voice to move the policy makers to enact real change.

### **Why is SEIU/Americans for Health Care so interested in helping everyone get health care coverage?**

Who better to address this issue than those who are on the front lines every day? SEIU has 1.9 million members and is the largest health care union, representing nearly 1 million health care workers across the country. The reality is, health care costs are rising at such an alarming rate, no one can rely on being able to afford their care. Until we work together to solve this problem for everyone, we're all going to face the reality of being unable to afford quality care, whether we currently have coverage or not. The longer we wait to do something, the worse it's going to get.

# Health Care in America: The Crisis at a Glance

Every year, the cost of health care goes up. Costs are rising so fast that it's impossible to keep up. As a result, more and more people are losing their health care. Small businesses are finding it impossible to provide their employees with health care without going under, and the self-employed are being forced to go without coverage because they simply can't afford it.

## Health Care Costs Are Skyrocketing

Health care cost increases are easily outpacing wages. These rising costs make it difficult for small businesses to provide basic coverage, and corporations are shifting the growing burden directly to their employees, leaving many Americans without affordable coverage.

- In 2005, employer **health insurance premiums increased by 9.2% - nearly three times the rate of inflation**. Under an employer health plan, **the annual premium for a family of four averaged nearly \$11,000**. For single coverage it's over \$4,000. In 2006, it will have cost about \$13,382 – a 9.6% increase over 2005.
- In 2004 national health expenditures rose 7.9 percent – over three times the rate of inflation. **Total spending in 2004 was \$1.9 trillion**. That's 16% of GDP and \$6,280 per person.
- **By 2015 it is projected that annual spending on health care will skyrocket to 4 trillion dollars – 20% of GDP**. This means:
  - Americans will spend \$421 billion of their own money, up from \$248.8 billion in 2005
  - Prescription drug spending is expected to reach \$446 billion, up from \$188 billion in 2004
  - Medicare spending will reach \$792 billion, up from \$309 billion in 2004
  - Medicaid spending will reach \$320 billion, up from \$293 billion in 2004

## Over 46 Million Americans Have No Health Care

Under the Bush Administration, the number of uninsured Americans has escalated from 41.2 million in 2001 to 46.6 million in 2005.

- **Every minute, nearly 3 people lose their health insurance in the U.S.**
- **Nearly 91 million people went without coverage for part of the last two years. This equates to a third of the entire U.S. population.**
- **81 percent of those without insurance come from working families.**
- **8.3 million children in America have no health care.**

At least 18,000 Americans die every year solely because they cannot afford private health insurance. Odds are the number of deaths is even higher.

## Employer-Based Coverage Has Decreased

Between 2000 and 2005, the percentage of employers offering health benefits has fallen from 69% to 60%, with the decline occurring predominantly among small firms (3-199 workers). Costs for employers with 3 to 199 workers jumped about 10% last year from 2004, higher than the 9% bump for those with 200 or more.

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The percentage of workers covered by health insurance offered through their own employer has fallen from 63% of workers in 2000 to 60% in 2005.

### **The Crisis Affects Everyone**

The scope of the health care crisis is reaching record proportions and touches the lives of Americans from all backgrounds, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, education, employment, or age.

- **33 percent of Hispanics living in the U.S. are uninsured.**
- **20 percent of Black Americans and 17 percent of Asians are uninsured, compared with 15 percent of whites.**
- **22 percent of the uninsured are in families with incomes \$50,000 and over.**
- **3.9 million people aged 55-64 were uninsured in 2004.**

Eight out of ten uninsured women are in families with at least one person in the workforce, either part-time or full-time. Two-thirds of uninsured women (65%) are in families with at least one adult working full-time. Just 20% of uninsured women are in nonworking families.

### **Small Businesses and the Self-Employed Can't Afford Health Care**

More than 25 million Americans own a small business. But since small businesses and the self-employed aren't able to purchase insurance as cheaply as large corporations, rising health costs are making it increasingly difficult for them to afford basic health coverage for their employees and their families.

- **Less than half of small businesses offer health insurance.**
- **Workers in small firms are three times as likely to be uninsured as workers in large firms.**