

THE BACKGROUND:



The Path to Change

Major changes to our health care system have been proposed in the past. They failed, not for lack of credibility, but because politics got in the way of reason and action. The changes envisioned by the people of America's hospitals will not be achieved by one political party simply "outvoting" the other. The only path to a better future for America's health and health care is through a deliberate bipartisan process, where multiple views can be expressed, debated, refined....and brought to action.

Ask the candidates: If elected, how would you work to achieve change in a bipartisan manner?

Coverage for all

The AHA is part of the Health Coverage Coalition for the Uninsured (HCCU), a group of 16 very diverse national organizations that have set aside their policy differences to agree on a plan to expand health care coverage to all. The plan starts by covering America's children and then moves on to cover the broader uninsured population. HCCU believes that this issue can and should be resolved in a bipartisan way. If these diverse organizations can put aside their differences to pursue a common goal, shouldn't our political leaders?

Ask the candidates: If elected, what steps would you take to provide health care coverage for all?

America's Health Care Future

America has what it takes to offer the best in health care – leading-edge technology, highly trained practitioners, care provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But our efforts fall short because of many challenges – the increasing number of uninsured people, more chronic illness, and high costs that are making health care coverage unaffordable for many. More can and must be done. The AHA is committed to involving everyone with a stake in better health care to collectively develop innovative ideas for change.

Ask the candidates: If elected, what will you do to improve health and health care in America?



The Demands on America's Hospitals

Every year, America's hospitals care for 118 million patients in their emergency departments. They treat 600 million outpatients, perform 27 million surgeries, and bring 4 million babies into the world. The need for hospital care will increase as 77 million Baby Boomers reach retirement age. Millions of these patients will be covered by Medicare and Medicaid. Yet, Medicare repays hospitals only 91 cents for every dollar it takes to provide care for a Medicare patient. Medicaid payments are worse, reimbursing only 86 cents for each dollar provided in services. Nationwide, this amounts to \$30 billion in underpayment. Yet, some in the administration and Congress continue to advocate for cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, threatening the very hospital services that America's children, elderly and disabled citizens rely on.

Ask the candidates: If elected, what will you do to make sure America's hospitals have the resources to meet their communities' needs?

THE FUTURE:

Campaign 2008: An Opportunity to Spark a Meaningful National Discussion about What Health and Health Care in America Should Be

Health care in America is a patchwork quilt, mended together over time to address disparate needs. Addressing the problems of the U.S. health care system – the lack of coverage for all is just one – requires a broader discussion about health care in our nation.

The AHA Board of Trustees, with the input and participation of many in the hospital field, has developed a framework for health care reform called Health for Life: Better Health, Better Health Care. It's not a "hospital plan" for reform, but rather a roadmap for the American public to reach the goal of health care that is accessible, affordable and of the highest quality.

This framework is built on five essential elements:

- 1) **Focus on Wellness ...**
good primary care, health education and healthy lifestyles are essential to improving health.
- 2) **Most Efficient Affordable Care ...**
better value is needed for each health care dollar.
- 3) **Highest Quality Care ...**
teamwork and care coordination to ensure the right care is given at the right time in the right setting.
- 4) **Best Information ...**
using health information technology to improve care.
- 5) **Health Coverage for All, Paid for by All ...**
acknowledgement that everyone must play a role in expanding and paying for coverage for all.

National Framework for Change



The AHA will help ignite a national discussion on health reform, and will continue to work in collaboration with others to develop specific public policy changes to move towards this future.



ASK THESE QUESTIONS:

Over the coming months candidates for president and the Congress will come calling. They will want to talk about health care... and hospitals. This is your opportunity to advance better health and better health care for America and ensure that elected officials and candidates know there is a mandate for change. This is your opportunity to ask the questions... and get some answers.

- If elected, what steps would you take to provide health care coverage for all?
- If elected, what will you do to improve health and health care in America?
- If elected, how would you work to achieve change in a bipartisan manner?
- If elected, what will you do to make sure America's hospitals have the resources to meet their communities' needs?

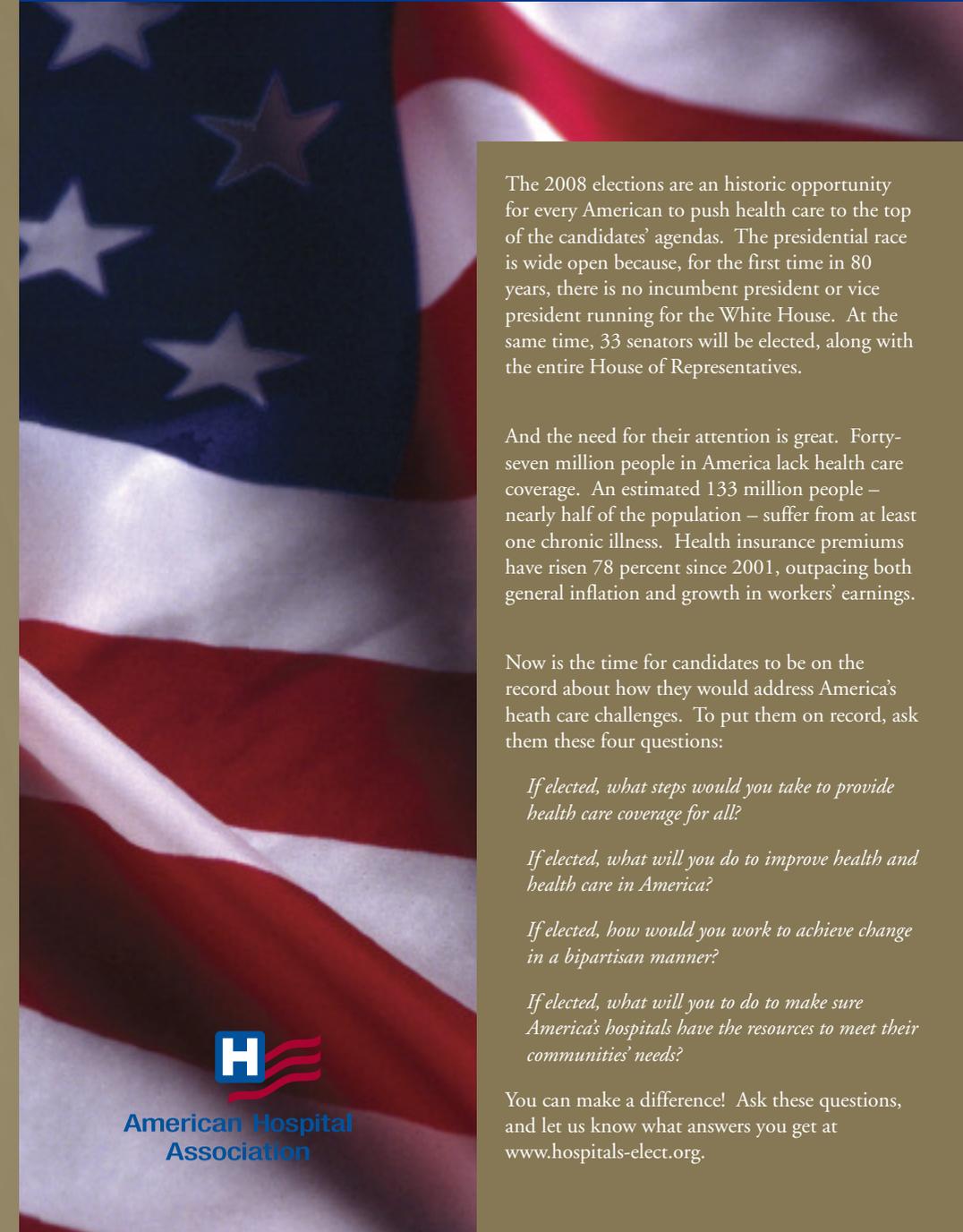


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CAMPAIGN 2008

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *Ask the Candidates*



The 2008 elections are an historic opportunity for every American to push health care to the top of the candidates' agendas. The presidential race is wide open because, for the first time in 80 years, there is no incumbent president or vice president running for the White House. At the same time, 33 senators will be elected, along with the entire House of Representatives.

And the need for their attention is great. Forty-seven million people in America lack health care coverage. An estimated 133 million people – nearly half of the population – suffer from at least one chronic illness. Health insurance premiums have risen 78 percent since 2001, outpacing both general inflation and growth in workers' earnings.

Now is the time for candidates to be on the record about how they would address America's health care challenges. To put them on record, ask them these four questions:

If elected, what steps would you take to provide health care coverage for all?

If elected, what will you do to improve health and health care in America?

If elected, how would you work to achieve change in a bipartisan manner?

If elected, what will you do to make sure America's hospitals have the resources to meet their communities' needs?

You can make a difference! Ask these questions, and let us know what answers you get at www.hospitals-elect.org.



**American Hospital
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