

**American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)**  
*Universal health care system built on the Medicare program*

**Organization Description:** The AFL-CIO is a coalition of 53 national and international labor unions. It was founded in 1955 and advocates on behalf of organized labor to empower and ensure social and economic justice for the collective group employees served by its member unions. In addition to advocacy, by pooling the purchasing power of its members, the AFL-CIO gives members access to products and services at discounted costs.

**Proposal Summary:** In 2007, the AFL-CIO Executive Council released a statement supporting a comprehensive, universal health care system that builds upon the existing Medicare program. This proposal also defines key elements of success for health care reform, consistent with AFL-CIO positions released in the past several years. AFL-CIO also stresses the importance of coverage via Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) expansions and greater employer contributions to health care costs. It advocates against association health plans, individual tax credits, and defined contribution health plans as mechanisms through which to expand coverage.

- **Coverage:** AFL-CIO supports the development of a national health care system that relies on a social insurance model and builds upon the Medicare program. In the absence of such a system, AFL-CIO supports the simplification and expansion of Medicaid and SCHIP as well as state proposals to cover the uninsured. AFL-CIO works to preserve retiree health benefits and the current employer-based insurance system. It promotes reducing the amount of beneficiary cost sharing required under Medicare Part D.
- **Quality:** AFL-CIO supports efforts to reduce medical errors and promote best practices. AFL-CIO unions work with employers to reduce expensive medical errors and poor quality care by agreeing upon certain patient safety measures in contract language and through participation in the Leapfrog Group.
- **Cost:** AFL-CIO's Executive Council statement supports shared, financial responsibility for health care and broad risk-pooling across populations. It argues that expanding coverage through Medicare would reduce administrative costs compared to private plans. It also recommends controlling costs by improving health care efficiency, collecting information on provider performance, promoting best practices, and reducing medical errors.

AFL-CIO advocates for reinsurance and value-based purchasing to reduce overall health care costs (2003). It works with states via the organization's *Fair Share Health Care* campaign to prompt legislation that would require corporations to contribute a fixed percentage of their payroll toward employee health care coverage, or contribute into a state Fair Share Health Care Fund. AFL-CIO has not put forth model legislation for states but believes that the percent of payroll that employers should contribute to health care be set by the state legislature or be based on the average percentage paid by large employers in the state.

- **Health Information Technology:** AFL-CIO encourages using technology to reduce medical errors, promote best practices, and contain health care costs.

- *Other:* AFL-CIO advocates for an array of worker protections. Specifically, it supports reducing (1) the amount of overtime health care employees work and (2) the use of unsafe medical equipment. While no specifics were put forth pertaining to the reduction in health care worker overtime, the AFL-CIO does advocate for state legislation mandating safety devices (such as safety needles) to prevent workers from being stuck by needles.

**Proposal Date:** 2003, 2006, 2007

*Sources: AFL-CIO – Executive Council Statement on Health Care, 2007, <http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheafcio/ecouncil/ec03062007.cfm>; AFL-CIO Executive Council – Health Care Reform, 2006, <http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheafcio/ecouncil/ec08082006.cfm>; AFL-CIO Health Care Action in States, 2006, <http://www.aflcio.org/issues/legislativealert/stateissues/healthcare/>; What's Wrong with America's Health Care, 2006, <http://www.aflcio.org/issues/healthcare/whatswrong/>; AFL-CIO Executive Council – Renewing the Drive for Comprehensive Health Care Reform, 2003, <http://www.aflcio.org/aboutus/thisistheafcio/ecouncil/ec02252003a.cfm>.*