A HOSPITAL GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

In every community, the blue and white “H” points to a place that friends and neighbors rely on for care, 24-7. And while no two hospitals are the same, all share the role of community provider. Help us provide our communities leadership on the important issue of health reform.

The American Hospital Association’s (AHA) Board has spent the past few years discussing health reform with hundreds of hospital leaders as well as national leaders from business, insurers, community health, consumer groups, labor and others. The result is in the development of a reform framework called *Health for Life: Better Health. Better Health Care*. Enclosed is a set of resources to help you build momentum for health reform locally, drawing from lessons we’ve learned and materials we’ve found useful.

From the hospital boardroom to the patient bedside, the men and women in America’s hospitals are community leaders. Daily they see the impact health and our current health system have on patients and families. Involving hospital trustees, employees, volunteers and auxilians is the only way to start a tide of change. Working together, we can drive the health reform discussion and achieve real change.
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ENGAGING *HOSPITAL TRUSTEE LEADERS*
IN HEALTH REFORM
Every day, the women and men in America’s hospitals see the personal way health affects local communities, from emergency rooms and birthing centers to free clinics and cancer centers. As the debate over health care reform continues to dominate the media, political campaigns and the minds of Americans, hospitals stand in position to help their communities understand what health policy means for local families and neighbors. Building momentum around health reform begins with you. After completing the checklist below, consider the outlined actions on the next page.

Determine the following:

☐ As states discuss health reform, has your board considered ways to be proactive in changing health and health care?

☐ Have you listened to community leaders talk about their wishes for health reform?

☐ Are you including elements of health reform when you speak to local business and community leaders?

☐ Do you have an employee strategy in place to ensure the women and men in your hospital have an opportunity to be involved in health reform discussions?
The following steps reflect a natural progression based on the process AHA followed with its Health for Life initiative. Followed as outlined, you can lead reform discussions at the local level starting with your organizational leadership, hospital board of trustees, employees and volunteers, as well as other local leaders. Consider building your activities around the Health for Life framework.

Be aware that 501(c)(3) organizations may not directly or indirectly support or oppose a candidate or political party but may conduct non-partisan voter education and registration activities. It is important for hospitals to distinguish between prohibited election-related activities and permissible voter education and registration activities. For more information and guidance, consult AHA’s “Legal Guidelines for Election-Related Activity” (in Additional Resources). Support materials to help you execute these activities are available in the appendix CD-ROM.

**ACTIONS**

**STEP 1**

**Objective:** Lead reform discussions at the local level.

**Action:** Bring your hospital and your community into the health reform debate (see Understanding Reform Perceptions).

**STEP 2**

**Objective:** Encourage all local leaders to press their elected officials for action.

**Action:** Share the “Ask the Candidates” questions with everyone who participates in your reform discussions (see Encouraging Reform Participation).
Hospital trustees are a powerful and effective resource for building community will. They routinely see the fallout from lack of access, disparities associated with coverage and preventive care and are acutely aware that achieving better health and health care is critical.

As a stakeholder in America’s health care, hospital trustees have the unique power to engage friends and colleagues in candid discussions about health reform. As a hospital trustee, they also have the power to bring about change.

To start the momentum, share the Health for Life framework and issue backgrounders (framework memo and issue backgrounders available in the appendix CD-ROM) with your trustees and senior management. Set a date to discuss the framework.

Allow time for your entire board of trustees or a task force of key members to do a brief “homework” assignment, an informal summary about which they can be prepared to discuss on the set date.

Tools you can use

Available on the appendix CD-ROM: Health reform framework memo and issue backgrounders.
Questions to begin follow-up discussion: (Start by asking those who completed the “homework” to share their impressions.)

- After talking to others, what do you believe are the most serious problems of our health system?
- What do you believe are the most important levers for change? (Insurance coverage for all? Changing provider payment incentives? New system financing? Improved care coordination? Accessible patient health information through IT? Standardized health care transactions? Others?)
- What elements of the Health for Life reform framework came up most often? (Focus on wellness; most efficient, affordable care; highest quality care; best information; health coverage for all, paid for by all)

At the follow up meeting with the full board of trustees, allow at least an hour for discussion.

Ask hospital trustees, or select members, to informally ask three to five community members for whom health care is a major concern the following question:

1 Homework

If you could change one thing about America’s health care system, what would it be? Why?

Ask that question of three or five of the following people:

- Yourself
- A business leader
- A patient or individual with a chronic condition
- A person in their 30s
- Someone without insurance

The objective is to listen to the views of others and understand their perspective on the most important changes that need to be made in our health care system.
Over the coming months candidates from all political parties running for office will come calling. They will want to talk about health care…and hospitals. This is the opportunity to encourage your board of trustees to become engaged. While 501(c)(3) organizations cannot support or oppose candidates or issues, nor should hospitals publicize campaign events, hospitals may conduct non-partisan other education and registration activities.

Below are key questions AHA is encouraging every one to ask of those running for elected office. Share these with your trustees and encourage them to get elected officials on the record.

**KEY QUESTIONS**

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 the record, ask them these four questions:

1. If elected, what steps would you take to provide health care coverage for all?
2. If elected, what will you do to improve health and health care in America?
3. If elected, how would you work to achieve change in a non-partisan manner?
4. If elected, what will you do to make sure America’s hospitals have the resources to meet their communities’ need?

Available on the appendix CD-ROM: “Ask the Candidate” questions.
ENGAGING COMMUNITY LEADERS
IN HEALTH REFORM
As a leader in your community, hospital CEOs are in a unique position to focus local attention on the growing health care reform debate. Working with colleagues—from religious leaders to members of the business community—lead the discussion about health reform for your local community.

After completing the checklist below, consider the outlined actions on the next page.

Determine the following:

☐ Have you listened to community leaders talk about their wishes for health reform?

☐ Are you including elements of health reform when you speak to local business and community leaders?
The following steps reflect a natural progression based on the process AHA followed with its *Health for Life* initiative. Followed as outlined, you can lead reform discussions at the local level starting with your organizational leadership, hospital board of trustees, employees and volunteers, as well as other local leaders. Consider building your activities around the *Health for Life* framework.

Be aware that 501(c)(3) organizations may not directly or indirectly support or oppose a candidate or political party but may conduct non-partisan voter education and registration activities. It is important for hospitals to distinguish between prohibited election-related activities and permissible voter education and registration activities. For more information and guidance, consult AHA’s “Legal Guidelines for Election-Related Activity” (in Additional Resources). Support materials to help you execute these activities are available in the appendix CD-ROM.

**ACTIONS**

**STEP 1**

*Objective:* Demonstrate your leadership by facilitating change, incorporating broad input to achieve improved health and health care.

*Action:* If no local health reform commission exists, create a forum for health reform dialog (see *Building Reform Through Dialog*).

**STEP 2**

*Objective:* Encourage all local leaders to press their elected officials for action.

*Action:* Share the “Ask the Candidates” questions with everyone who participates in your reform discussions (see *Encouraging Local Leader Reform Participation*).
After introducing hospital leadership to the key elements of health reform and determining what they feel to be essential, broaden the discussion to create consensus among key leaders in your community. Bring together local stakeholders and facilitate a discussion about health reform, your community, and what elements of reform are important.

Identify key stakeholders in your community.

Beyond the board, consider heads of business, insurers, members of state legislature, consumer and patient advocacy groups, providers groups (physicians, mid-levels and others) and others. Specific suggestions include:

- **Business**: state chamber of commerce, heads of banks or businesses
- **Insurers**: include representatives from insurers and other providers.
- **Labor**: reach out to labor and other employee-based related groups.
- **Consumer and Patient Advocacy Groups**: state chapter of AARP, churches or religious organizations, Rotary clubs, local chapters of a disease group, such as the American Diabetes Association, and organizations representing large ethnic or minority populations.
STATE REFORM DIALOG

★ Decide on the appropriate forum
Consider whether you would like to hold a large, roundtable or town hall style public dialog on health reform involving many stakeholders at once, whether you would like to engage in more in-depth one-on-one meetings, or small focus groups.

NOTE: You may wish to start with one-on-one meetings and then pull a larger group together once you have a better idea of the interest and issues of others.

★ Roundtable
Determine who will facilitate the discussion and how you will structure the time in such a way that everyone’s viewpoints and values may be heard. Consider sharing the Health for Life reform framework and issue backgrounders with participants in advance so everyone has a common starting point. There are many ways to conduct a large-scale meeting. Some common formats to consider:

» Facilitator (outside or hospital leadership): Consider using the Health for Life reform framework as an introduction to health reform. The facilitator moderates a discussion asking key questions and allowing all participants an opportunity to weigh in (stakeholder questions available in appendix CD-ROM).

» Small panel of involved local leaders briefly discuss key elements of health reform then a facilitator moderates a question and answer session.

Consider packaging highlights from the event for use with local policymakers, your community and the state hospital association.
ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUPS

Determine who should conduct the interviews – consider hospital trustees, senior hospital leaders or a combination. The appropriate interviewer may change given relationships and personal contacts with the stakeholders. At times, a combination of several interviewers may be best. For focus groups, limit group size to five. For one-on-one interviews, allow 30 minutes to an hour. For focus groups allow at least an hour for discussion.

1 PREPARATION

Consider sharing questions and the Health for Life reform framework memo, issue backgrounders or presentation with participants in advance. Stress that this is not a questionnaire, but ideas to ignite a conversation about health reform (framework memo and PowerPoint presentation available in appendix CD-ROM).

2 MAXIMIZING YOUR EFFORT

Within a few days of your interviews, send a personal letter to the participants thanking them for their time, insights and perspectives. Summarize what you heard and outline any follow-up activities you may be planning (sample thank you letter available in appendix CD-ROM).
3 INTERVIEW

Be prepared to sit back and listen while noting interview impressions, implications and possible actions *(interview worksheet available in appendix CD-ROM)*.

**STARTER QUESTION:**
If you could change one thing about America’s health care system, what would it be? Why?

Ask for reactions to AHA’s reform framework. Use the remaining time to engage the individual in a discussion. Some questions to consider asking as you explore their views:

- What is your overall impression of the framework?
- From your perspective, are these the right issues, goals and objectives?
- Do you think these five pillars are the most important areas of change?
- What do you like best? What elicits your strongest support?
- What do you dislike? Or, what makes you most uncomfortable?
- What changes would you suggest?
- Do you think this can be achieved politically?
- Do you have any advice moving forward?

4 FOLLOW-UP

Report back key findings and insights to state hospital association leadership and AHA. Consider packaging highlights from the sessions for use with policymakers, other local leaders, and the public.
Over the coming months candidates from all political parties running for office will come calling. They will want to talk about health care…and hospitals. This is the opportunity to encourage leaders in your community to become engaged for the sake of community health. While 501(c)(3) organizations cannot support or oppose candidates or issues, nor should hospitals publicize campaign events, hospitals may conduct non-partisan voter education and registration activities.

Below are key questions AHA is encouraging everyone to ask of those running for elected office. Share the questions below with local leaders and encourage them to get candidates and elected officials on the record.

**KEY QUESTIONS**

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 the record, ask them these four questions:

1. If elected, what steps would you take to provide health care coverage for all?
2. If elected, what will you do to improve health and health care in America?
3. If elected, how would you work to achieve change in a non-partisan manner?
4. If elected, what will you do to make sure America’s hospitals have the resources to meet their communities’ needs?
ENGAGING *HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES*
IN HEALTH REFORM
Every day, the women and men in America’s hospitals see the impact good health has on patients, neighbors and friends. This year, the hospital field is working to put politics aside and unite everyone around improving health as well as health care.

Follow the steps below to engage your employees in the local health reform effort.

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<th>ACTIONS</th>
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<td><strong>STEP 1</strong></td>
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| **Objective:** Demonstrate the value you place on employee views and values.  
**Action:** Host an employee town hall meeting or invite employees to participate in focus groups (see Communicating Employee Value). |
| **STEP 2** |
| **Objective:** Promote health reform at a local level.  
**Action:** Encourage employees to be engaged in health reform (see Encouraging Participation). |
| **STEP 3** |
| **Objective:** Encourage employees to find local health reform solutions. Encourage every employee to vote.  
**Action:** Create employee task forces on wellness, quality and other elements key to health reform. Provide non-partisan voter registration opportunities (see Empowering Employees). |
Consider hosting open forums or small, focus-group style meetings with employees about the hospital’s health reform effort. Make sure everyone who wishes to participate has an opportunity to do so. Allow at least an hour for discussion.

**1 PREPARATION**

Consider sharing the *Health for Life* reform framework memo or issue backgrounders with participants in advance, as well as key questions. Stress that this is not a questionnaire, but ideas to ignite a conversation about health reform (*framework memo available in appendix CD-ROM*).

**2 MAXIMIZING YOUR EFFORT**

Within a few days of your interviews, send a personal letter to the participants thanking them for their time, insights and perspectives. Consider summarizing what you heard in the hospital newsletter or other forum (*sample thank you letter available in appendix CD-ROM*).
3 INTERVIEW

Be prepared to sit back and listen while noting interview impressions, implications and possible actions (interview worksheet available in appendix CD-ROM).

STARTER QUESTION:
If you could change one thing about America's health care system, what would it be? Why?

Ask for reactions to AHA's reform framework. Use the remaining time to engage the individual in a discussion. Some questions to consider asking as you explore their views:

- What is your overall impression of the framework?
- From your perspective, are these the right issues, goals and objectives?
- Do you think these five pillars are the most important areas of change?
- What do you like best? What elicits your strongest support?
- What do you dislike? Or, what makes you most uncomfortable?
- What changes would you suggest?
- Do you think this can be achieved politically?
- Do you have any advice moving forward?

Available on the appendix CD-ROM:
Framework memo, issue backgrounders, sample thank you letters, and interview worksheet.
ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

Over the coming months candidates from all political parties running for office will come calling. They will want to talk about health care…and hospitals. This is the opportunity to encourage your employees to become engaged. While 501(c)(3) organizations cannot support or oppose candidates or issues, nor should hospitals publicize campaign events, hospitals may conduct non-partisan voter education and registration activities.

Below are key questions AHA is encouraging every one to ask of those running for elected office. Consider providing this information to your employees via email, newsletter or other communication.

KEY QUESTIONS

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 the record, ask them these four questions:

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

Available on the appendix CD-ROM: AHA’s “Ask the Candidate” questions. Also see “Legal Guidelines for Election-Related Activities” available under Additional Resources.
EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES

1. Create employee task forces to focus on what your hospital organization can do to improve health and health care in the absence of federal or state policy change. Consider the following options:

   » **Wellness taskforce** — Focus on what your hospital organization can do to improve wellness among your employees.

   » **Efficient/affordable care task force** — Consider strategies that involve preventive care and chronic condition management that would help local patients and families that can keep them healthier and out of the emergency department. What more can be done within your organization to improve efficiency and overall performance?

   » **Highest quality care task force** — Consider new ways of improving upon the high quality of care provided.

   » **Best information task force** — Are there ways to provide patients and the community more information about quality, out-of-pocket costs and other information? What systems would help employees and other health care professionals share information to improve patient safety and quality?

   » **Health coverage for all, paid for by all** — Are there partnerships that could help expand coverage? Have other communities found coverage solutions? If so, what aspects can be applied locally?

2. Provide voter registration materials in common areas so employees can easily register to vote if they have not already done so. As you plan registration activities be aware of the following guidelines:

   » All voter registration activities must be conducted in a non-partisan manner and must not be timed to influence voter acceptance or rejection of a particular candidate.

   » Activities cannot involve any written or oral statements which support or oppose a candidate or political party.

   » Hospitals should not publicize campaign events.

   » Campaign literature should not be distributed or made available on hospital premises.

For more information on election related activities, please see AHA’s member-only resource, “Legal Guidelines for Election-Related Activity” under Additional Resources.
ENGAGING VOLUNTEER DIRECTORS, AUXILIANS AND VOLUNTEERS IN HEALTH REFORM
As leaders in the community and active ambassadors of the hospital, volunteer directors, auxilians, and volunteers see first hand the important role health plays in the lives of individuals and families. As local and national elections take center stage, the hospital field is working to unite communities around what matters most—life and health—encouraging communities nationwide to put politics aside and work towards better health as well as better health care.

Follow the steps below to engage your volunteers, volunteer directors and auxilians in the local health reform effort.

**ACTIONS**

**STEP 1**

**Objective:** Promote health reform at a local level.

**Action:** Provide opportunities for volunteers to be engaged *(see Encouraging Participation).*

**STEP 2**

**Objective:** Encourage every employee to vote.

**Action:** Provide voter registration opportunities *(see Empowering Volunteers).*

**STEP 3**

**Objective:** Demonstrate the value you place on the work volunteer directors, auxilians, and volunteers do.

**Action:** Share key messages and goals for volunteers to take into the hospital and the community *(see Empowering Volunteers).*
Over the coming months candidates from all political parties running for office will come calling. They will want to talk about health care…and hospitals. This is the opportunity to encourage your volunteers to become engaged. While 501(c)(3) organizations cannot support or oppose candidates or issues, nor should hospitals publicize campaign events, hospitals may conduct non-partisan voter education and registration activities.

Below are key questions AHA is encouraging every one to ask of those running for elected office. Consider providing this information to your volunteer directors, auxiliaries, and volunteers via email, newsletter or other communication.

**KEY QUESTIONS**

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 the record, ask them these four questions:

1. If elected, what steps would you take to provide health care coverage for all?
2. If elected, what will you do to improve health and health care in America?
3. If elected, how would you work to achieve change in a non-partisan manner?
4. If elected, what will you do to make sure America’s hospitals have the resources to meet their communities’ needs?
Consider providing voter registration materials in common areas so volunteers can easily register to vote if they have not already done so. Also consider asking hospital volunteer directors to organize or host community voter registration events or sessions in local senior centers, colleges and other community spaces.

As planning for registration activities begin, be aware of the following guidelines:

**GUIDELINES**

- All voter registration activities must be conducted in a non-partisan manner and must not be timed to influence voter acceptance or rejection of a particular candidate.
- Activities cannot involve any written or oral statements which support or oppose a candidate or political party.
- All materials and publications associated with voter education activities should include a disclaimer stating that the information or activity is not intended to reflect an endorsement for, or opposition to, any candidate or political party.
- Activities cannot be coordinated with a candidate’s campaign or political party.
- Hospitals should not publicize campaign events.
- Campaign literature should not be distributed or made available on hospital premises.

_for more information on election related activities, please see AHA’s member-only resource, “Legal Guidelines for Election-Related Activity” under Additional Resources._
1. Empower Volunteers to listen to patients. Solicit ideas for change from patients in your own organization. Consider a formal opportunity for volunteers to aggregate and discuss patients’ ideas.

2. Hospital volunteers often speak with many diverse local individuals and organizations. Consider providing volunteers a short presentation that talks about local health reform efforts in which the hospital is involved as well as consensus priorities – such as affordability, access and prevention—that the community has agreed upon for reform. (The Health for Life PowerPoint is available in the appendix CD-ROM)

3. Train volunteers to lead conversations about reform in the community in settings such as
   » Churches
   » Schools
   » Senior Groups
   » Community Groups

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
AHA’s reform framework:

www.aha.org, found as overview under “Health for Life”

American Hospital Association.
Health for Life: Health Coverage for All Paid for by All,
October 2007.
www.aha.org, found as reports on trends under “Health for Life”

American Hospital Association.
Health for Life: Most Efficient, Affordable Care,
October 2007.
www.aha.org, found as reports on trends under “Health for Life”

American Hospital Association.
Health for Life: Best Information,
October 2007.
www.aha.org, found as reports on trends under “Health for Life”

American Hospital Association.
Health for Life: Focus on Wellness,
October 2007.
www.aha.org, found as reports on trends under “Health for Life”

American Hospital Association.
Health for Life: Highest Quality,
October 2007.
www.aha.org, found as reports on trends under “Health for Life”

Keeping Health Care Affordable
www.aha.org, under Issues, “Affordability”

American Hospital Association.
Legal Guidelines for Election Related Activity
www.aha.org, found as “Q&A: Legal Guidelines…” under Advocacy/Ethics of Lobbying (requires member log-in)