

Title:

A Healthcare Agenda For America

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Summary:

With the Democratic and Republican primary campaigns already well under way, the American public is being involved in a major examination of our national priorities and direction for the years ahead including the issue of healthcare.

According to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll in March, after Iraq, healthcare is the single most important issue among American voters today.

And healthcare is an issue that we will continue to face regardless of what happens on the interna...

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Article Body:

With the Democratic and Republican primary campaigns already well under way, the American public is being involved in a major examination of our national priorities and direction for the years ahead including the issue of healthcare.

According to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll in March, after Iraq, healthcare is the single most important issue among American voters today.

And healthcare is an issue that we will continue to face regardless of what happens on the international front. It directly affects all of us, our families, our friends, and our country.

Following the Congressional efforts to introduce government negotiations of prescription drug prices, and as the battles for the nominations progress, the question before us is; "What should be the healthcare agenda for America?"

We as a nation face enormous challenges on the healthcare front. This country is the home to the most advanced medical expertise on the planet, yet many of our citizens have little or no access to affordable health care.

And while our healthcare system has helped more and more Americans live longer

and healthier lives, the medical needs of a growing elderly population mean we must discover new and better ways to help our system deliver the kinds and levels of care that are needed.

Americans want real progress on healthcare. They want to see healthcare needs and issues addressed in a spirit of partnership, not partisanship. That's means developing bi partisan solutions that reflect the best input and ideas from Congress, the healthcare community, businesses, labor unions, and of course the public.

What is clear is that America wants everyone to work together in a constructive manner. If we do so, major progress is possible.

Medicare Part D marked a huge bipartisan step forward in addressing the need for affordable access to prescription drugs for our senior citizens. Medicare Part D has succeeded because of its popularity and because it is working for people.

According to a Wall Street Journal / Harris Interactive poll:

- * 68% of voters across the country said this program is a step in the right direction.
- * 70% of enrollees say the plan has saved them money.
- * 82% of enrollees say the plan has been easy to use.

"Medicare Drug Benefit Helps Most Enrollees Save, Poll Finds"
Wall Street Journal
November 7, 2006

What can we take away from this?

By working together, the members of the two parties were able to bring together the best ideas from both sides of the aisle to create a broad-based program that succeeds in achieving many critical goals.

It provides affordable access for all our nation's senior citizens, assures that participants will continue to have the opportunity to choose among all the newest drugs (rather than a select, government-approved list), and supports America's pharmaceutical research companies' mission to develop newer and more effective drugs to address many of our most urgent medical issues and conditions.

As important as this landmark step is, however, we still have much more work to do to support the healthcare needs of all Americans.

As Americans, polling shows we are all united around basic healthcare principles:

- * Americans should have the opportunity to get the best treatment in the world.
- * Americans should have the freedom to choose their own doctor and primary care provider.
- * All Americans need fair access to healthcare and security from rising costs, particularly costs associated with catastrophic illness.

The public expects real action. 64% of respondents in the Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health survey felt that the president and Congress can do a lot about the cost of health care.

In terms of what should be done, the Kaiser poll found expanding coverage for the uninsured is at the top of the list of voter concerns. An overwhelming 85% want the government to do more to help provide health insurance for more Americans. People from every part of the country want progress on controlling health care costs, assuring access to medical care, and providing the highest possible quality of care.

67% want the President and Congress to increase spending on medical research for treatment and cures of diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

Polling has also shown strong support for:

- * Providing health insurance for all children.
- * Supporting steps to improve implementation of medical technology to control costs and reduce medical errors.
- * Training and locating doctors in rural areas and in economically deprived urban areas so that no one is shut out from getting needed care because of where they live.
- * Increasing funding for medical research to help keep our country as the world leader in medicine and medical treatments.

Healthcare should not become a partisan issue. We all have too much at stake to let real progress get bogged down in political gridlock. This campaign season is the ideal time to put the emphasis where it belongs, and demand real, practical, and cost-effective solutions to the healthcare challenge facing our nation.