



NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby Overview Position on HEALTH CARE REFORM

BACKGROUND: Since 1993-1994, NETWORK has worked in coalition with a number of groups focused on the comprehensive overhaul of the nation's health care system (if "system" is indeed the operable word). Among these were The Campaign for Health Security, a coalition of faith groups, public interest groups, unions, etc. Later, an Interfaith Community emerged which articulated faith-based principles in approaching the health care debate. Many of these groups became active participants in Hillary Clinton's efforts at reform of the health care system.

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM

The principles which guided our work and our evaluation of legislative initiatives were born of our convictions that: 1) that health care is a basic human right; 2) that, therefore, the nation must develop a system of universal coverage to ensure that right; 3) that the system be continually evaluated and adjusted to ensure its quality of care and cost effectiveness.

FINANCING THE SYSTEM

In the 1990's, the consensus was that this criteria could be best accomplished by a single payer system, a principle continually forwarded and legislatively implemented by Representatives Conyers ((D-MI) Jim McDermott (D-WA) (HR 1200), Pete Stark (D-CA) and John Dingell (D-MI), initiatives still most worthy of consideration as we move into any comprehensive reform. While "single payer" is no longer seen as the only option, a challenge to effective reform will be to craft a system that includes a realistic balance of financial contributions and health services.

CONTINUAL WORK OF REFORM ADVOCATES

Our original coalition members are continually active and monitor the actions of Congress relative health issues. We have strongly and vehemently lobbied to oppose privatization of Medicare, and the expansion of Medicaid and SCHIP. These are legislative vehicles which embody the belief that this nation should provide health care for every American. They will be especially needed in this economic recession.

NETWORK: FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) A total assessment of the quality of the current health care system, perhaps coupled with a study of the health care systems of other developed nations.**
- 2) A carefully and justly designed public-private plan with opportunity for ongoing public critique as well as dialogue with health care providers.**
- 3) A just progressive financing mechanism with careful concern for the millions of impoverished among us, especially children.**
- 4) A comprehensive overview of the entitlement programs.**
- 5) Continual and principled overview of the system's effectiveness at every level, i.e. analysis of who profits from it (patients, providers, etc.), with strong ongoing assessment of health benefits and containment of the pharmaceutical industry**

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