

CPEHN Analysis of Presidential Candidates and Health Care for Our Communities

December 17, 2007

Having Our Say (HOS) is a statewide coalition working to ensure that communities of color have a voice in the health care reform debate and that the solutions provide equal access to all Californians. The coalition is comprised of over 30 community organizations, and has identified key Health Care Reform Principles:

1. Provide universal and affordable health care coverage for all Californians.
2. Ensure equity of responsibility based on financial resources.
3. Assure an efficient health care system to sustain universal coverage.
4. Assure equitable, high quality health care for all.
5. Prioritize prevention by encouraging preventive care and creating healthy communities.

The attached grid extracts information directly from each candidate's websites and compares that information with the HOS principles. In summary, candidates from both parties have made general claims that their health policy proposals increase access to quality care, but only a few candidates have addressed issues specific to communities of color. Both parties need to do more to address our needs.

A majority of the Democrats support public programs (i.e. Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)), and wellness programs, including public parks and nutrition education. Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, former Senator John Edwards, and Governor Bill Richardson have all explicitly mentioned reducing health disparities as one of their priorities. Hilary Clinton has separate fact sheets on her website devoted to how her health reform proposals impact African American, Latino, and Asian and Pacific Islander communities, in which she discusses provisions for supporting culturally competent care through a \$50 million federal funding initiative, scholarships for workforce diversity, and standardizing quality data collection. John Edwards cites that he will support research into health disparities and support translation services, though in what way those services would be supported is not specified. Barack Obama will require providers to collect data on health disparities, promote workforce diversity, and support initiatives to develop healthy environments that prevent chronic conditions such as obesity. Bill Richardson will increase training for providers who work in communities of color and would elevate the Office of Indian Affairs to a Cabinet level office to help address the health needs of Native Americans. Representative Dennis Kucinich also raises the bar for other candidates by calling for a nationwide single payer system similar to California's SB 840 by State Senator Sheila Kuehl. However, Clinton, Edwards, and Richardson call for individual mandates in their plans, and we could not find explicit mentions of exemptions for affordability. We cannot force people to pay for insurance they cannot afford. We are also disappointed that the Democratic candidates do not clearly state whether they are committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of immigration status, will have access to care.

In regards to the Republican candidates, none of the major candidates directly address racial and ethnic health disparities. Their silence on this vital issue is disappointing. They generally rely on free market approaches such as tax subsidies and savings accounts. These proposals do not do enough to ensure expanded coverage for those who need it most and cannot afford coverage even with lower taxes. In addition, former Governor Mitt Romney is calling for eliminating state regulations on health insurers, and former Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Senator John McCain call for Americans to be able to purchase coverage through interstate markets, which is a way of bypassing state regulations. California has a number of hard-won consumer protections and model regulations. For instance, SB 853, which CPEHN sponsored, requires health plans and insurers to provide language access services. This is the type of state regulation that would be in jeopardy in an administration with a goal of reducing such regulations. Finally, while we could not find explicit references to whether candidates would deny immigrant families health care, we are concerned about their general rhetoric on the issue. Our health care system must work for all of us. We cannot leave anyone behind.

Democrats

Having Our Say Principles	Provide universal and affordable health care coverage for all Californians	Ensure equity of responsibility based on financial resources	Assure an efficient health care system to sustain universal coverage	Assure equitable, high quality health care for all	Prioritize the creation of healthy communities
Hilary Clinton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual mandate to purchase health insurance Businesses, employees, and the uninsured will have the option of buying group insurance through a new Health Choices Menu This Menu will be part of the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program (FEHBP), which includes numerous, high-quality private health insurance options Strengthen Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax credits will help individuals afford coverage Insurance companies will have to end discrimination based on pre-existing conditions Drug companies must offer fair prices and accurate information Employers must contribute to health coverage, with large firms required to provide health insurance or contribute to the cost of the system, and small businesses offered tax incentives to continue or begin to offer coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public hospitals and community health centers will continue to receive support to serve vulnerable populations Apply purchasing leverage to reduce prescription drug costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coverage includes mental health parity, and dental coverage Will increase workforce diversity through recruitment initiatives, loan forgiveness programs, and scholarships Will provide \$50 million in federal funding to develop culturally competent clinical care programs Standardize collection and reporting of quality data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States that access to insurance is the biggest cause of disparities As a condition of doing business with the federal government, insurers must cover high priority preventive services
John Edwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual mandate to purchase health insurance Increase affordability through new tax credits, expanding Medicaid and State Child Health Insurance Programs (SCHIP), and reforming insurance laws Create regional purchasing pools Strengthen the federal partnership with states to expand Medicaid and SCHIP to serve all adults under the poverty line and all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers will be required to either provide a comprehensive health plan to their employees or to contribute to the cost of covering them Require insurers to keep plans open to everyone and charge fair premiums, regardless of preexisting conditions, medical history, age, job, and other characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a health care safety net including public hospitals, clinics, and community health centers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support community efforts to improve health, such as safe streets, walking and biking trails, safe and well-equipped parks, and physical education programs for children Support medical research into disparities, reduce the pollutions and toxins that disproportionately harm

	children and parents under 250 percent of the poverty line (about \$50,000 for a family of four)				communities of colors, and support translation services to address language barriers
Dennis Kucinich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace existing public and private health insurance plans with a new universal public plan under which all Americans would be covered • Offer comprehensive benefits, including dental, mental health and vision services, and long-term care • Allow only public or not-for-profit providers of care to participate in the single-payer plan • Automatically enroll all US residents in the new public program 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish global budgets, allocated regionally, to provide funds for the operating costs of providing services and administering the program, and for capital expenditures needed for the construction of facilities or purchase of major equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A National Board of Universal Quality and Access would establish a uniform best quality standard of care relating to appropriate staffing levels, technology, health in the workplace, and best practices 	
Barack Obama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a new public insurance program, available to Americans who neither qualify for Medicaid or State Child Health Insurance Programs (SCHIP) nor have access to insurance through their employers, as well as to small businesses that want to offer insurance to their employees • Mandates that all children have health care coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require all employers to contribute towards health coverage for their employees or towards the cost of the public plan • Employers that do not offer meaningful coverage or make a meaningful contribution to the cost of quality health coverage for their employees will be required to contribute a percentage of payroll toward the costs of the national plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and expand the capacity of safety-net institutions, which provide a disproportionate amount of care for underserved populations with inadequate funding and technical resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a National Health Insurance Exchange that will give any American the opportunity to enroll in the new public plan or purchase an approved private plan, and income-based sliding scale subsidies will be provided for people and families who need it • Insurers would have to issue every applicant a policy, and charge fair and stable premiums that will not depend upon health status • Address differences in access to health coverage and promote prevention and public health, both of which play a major role in addressing disparities • Require hospitals and health plans to collect, analyze and report health care quality for disparity populations and hold them accountable for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerate efforts to develop and disseminate best practices, and align reimbursement with provision of high quality health care • Support employers that offer worksite health promotion programs, onsite clinical preventive services such as flu vaccinations, nutritious foods in their cafeterias and vending machines, and exercise facilities • Support healthy environments including sidewalks, biking paths and walking trails, local grocery stores, and wellness and educational campaigns • Restrict advertising for tobacco and alcohol to children • Increase funding to

				<p>any differences found</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversify the workforce to ensure culturally effective care • Will implement and fund evidence-based interventions, such as patient navigator programs 	<p>expand community based preventive interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require providers to collect data on quality and disparities
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Republicans

	Provide universal and affordable health care coverage for all Californians	Ensure equity of responsibility based on financial resources	Assure an efficient health care system to sustain universal coverage	Assure equitable, high quality health care for all	Prioritize the creation of healthy communities
Mike Huckabee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make health insurance more portable from one job to another • Expand Health Savings Accounts (HSA) to everyone, not just those with high deductibles • Will make health insurance tax deductible for individuals and families as it now is for businesses. • Low-income families would get tax credits instead of deductions. • Encourage state efforts to adopt new market-based approaches towards health care 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt electronic record keeping
Rudy Giuliani	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens will be allowed to purchase coverage through interstate markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer income exclusions of up to \$15,000 for those without employer coverage to make insurance more affordable • Provide Health Insurance Credit to low-income Americans that can be coupled with other revenue sources such as Medicaid and employer contributions to make coverage more affordable to the uninsured • Improve and expand Health Savings Accounts (HSA) Health, which provide incentives for consumers to maximize the value of services tailored to their needs 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create visibility of price, provider qualifications, and risk-adjusted procedure outcomes to expand competition, improve quality, and reduce costs • Invest in health information technology to reduce medical errors, improve efficiency, and detect health threats • Use incentives in insurance markets that promote wellness and better outcomes for chronic diseases • Propose initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles and wellness programs, and tie Medicaid payments to a state's success in promoting preventative care and tracking obesity for children
John McCain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance will be portable (moving from job to home, job to job), and will provide multi-year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow individuals to get insurance through any organization or association that they choose: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage insurance reforms to increase the variety and affordability of insurance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach children about health, nutrition and exercise

	<p>coverage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require any state receiving Medicaid to develop a financial "risk adjustment" bonus to high-cost and low-income families to supplement tax credits and Medicaid funds • Encouraging interstate markets: Families will be able to purchase health insurance nationwide, across state lines, to maximize their choices, and heighten competition for their business 	<p>employers, individual purchases, churches, professional association, and so forth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform the tax code to eliminate the bias toward employer-sponsored health insurance, and provide all individuals with a \$2,500 tax credit (\$5,000 for families) to increase incentives for insurance coverage • Reform the payment systems in Medicare to compensate providers for diagnosis, prevention, and care coordination • Medicare should not pay for preventable medical errors or mismanagement 	<p>coverage available to American families through competition and innovation</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public health initiatives to address obesity and diabetes, and to deter smoking • Make public more informed on treatment options and require transparency by providers regarding medical outcomes, quality of care, costs, and prices • Facilitate the development of national standards for measuring and recording treatments and outcomes • Foster the development of routes for safe, cheaper generic versions of drugs and biologic pharmaceuticals • Develop safety protocols that permit re-importation to keep competition vigorous
Mitt Romney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster competitive health insurance markets in states (eliminate regulations), reform the tax code • Allow full deductibility of qualified medical expenses, where accompanied by at least catastrophic insurance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage state-level health insurance market reforms, which will result in more affordable private coverage 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the use of information technology, establish cost and quality transparency, encourage more Health Savings Accounts (HSA) and co-insurance products, and call for more provider options
Fred Thompson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more information and more opportunities to choose affordable health care options • Calls for streamlining regulations 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the individual health of all Americans by shifting to a system that promotes cost-effective prevention, chronic-care management, and personal responsibility

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