

ACTION STEPS

1. Review our resource list. It includes Action Steps*.
2. Learn how to buy insurance. Can you find and afford your own insurance outside of an employer provided group plan? (This means an individual health policy.) Learn what your Cobra payment would be should you lose your health insurance. Can you pay this when unemployed?
3. Understand how our haphazard piecemeal "system" came about. Then compare health systems around the world. What should a high quality U.S. system look like?
4. Talk to your friends, family, coworkers and employers about the need for health care reform. Share your own values, concerns, and stories.
5. Know your representatives and their positions on health care reform at state and federal levels.
6. Attend candidate forums and raise the issue. Examine policy recommendations in view of your values, priorities, and purpose.
7. Create a letter writing/contact group to inform your candidates and representatives of the need for health care reform. - You may have seen the Harry and Louise Return.com commercials that ask Congress and the next president to Put Health Care First! Let them know your values, priorities, and purpose.
8. Write a letter to the editor advocating health care reform now.
9. Join a group advocating for reform. There are faith groups, nonprofits, business organizations, and health care professional groups.
10. Hold a Health Care Reform Forum in your own parish or other group. – Vision and Voice offers a 4 weeks adult education series based on dialog – Our Healthcare Future offers a full day dialog. There are other resources online.
11. Create an advocacy group in your parish to monitor health care legislation and write/call your legislator. Remember, bills navigate through state legislatures and Congress very slowly in order to build consensus. Keep up the demand for reform.
12. In the short run, advocate for SCHIP, and help enroll children and families who are eligible. There are an estimated six million eligible children not enrolled, with over 200,000 in Ohio. (Children's Defense Fund)
13. Participate in the online forum at the Cleveland Plain Dealer to save MetroHealth. Understand how no reimbursement for delivered care, especially emergency care, is causing the closing of hospitals. Cleveland lost Mount Sinai, a major trauma and teaching hospital. And like many Ohio counties, Lake County's hospital system is no longer a public institution. It is private.
14. Support public and nonprofit hospitals and charities that serve everyone, regardless of ability to pay. Volunteer if you are able. (Medical professionals can offer a weekend clinic through Remote Access Medical.)
15. Keep in touch with your own neighbors. Provide assistance or offer the assistance of existing ministries within your own parish or community. Example: In Cuyahoga County, call "211" for referrals to agencies offering services.

Top Quick Facts from Kaiser Family Foundation

Health spending in the United States averaged \$7,026 per person in 2006, totaling \$2.1 trillion, or 16% of our nation's economy, up from 7.2% of GDP in 1970 and 12.3% in 1990.

The top 1% of the U.S. population was responsible for 23% of health care spending in 2005.

46.5 million nonelderly Americans were uninsured in 2006, and more than seven in ten were in families with at least one full time worker.

Medicare covers 44 million Americans – 16% of whom are under age 65 and disabled – at a projected cost of \$420 billion in 2009.

Medicare accounts for 14% of the total federal budget, more than the Medicaid at 7%, but a smaller share than Social Security at 22%, or Defense at 20%.

Employers are the principal source of health insurance in the United States, for about 158.5 million people, or about 54% of all Americans; however, the percentage of employers who offer such benefits has been falling: 69% offered health coverage benefits in 2000, compared to 60% in 2007

The average premium for family health coverage through an employer was \$12,106 in 2007, of which covered workers paid an average of \$3,281.

Since 2001, family premiums for employer-sponsored insurance have increased 78%, while wages have gone up 19% and inflation has gone up 17%.

Over the past 25 years, annual increases in national health spending per capita have exceeded increases in the Consumer Price Index, most recently 5.7% vs. 3.2% in 2006.

The 24% of Medicaid enrollees who were elderly or disabled accounted for 70% of the \$275 billion in federal and state spending on services in 2005, while only 30% of spending was for the 45 million children and adults who make up 76% of total enrollment.

Medicaid pays 41% of all the nation's long-term care costs – making it by far the largest payer for long-term care.

The economy, Iraq, gas prices and health care dominate the issue agenda for election 2008.