

The Church's Teaching

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has long advocated health care for all. In their pastoral letter, *Health and Health Care*, the bishops called for a “comprehensive health care system that will ensure a basic level of health care for all Americans.” Pope John XXIII, in his encyclical *Peace on Earth*, listed health care among those basic rights which flow from the sanctity and dignity of human life. In the same tradition, Pope John Paul II addressed the need for health care in *On Human Work*, where he focused on the availability and affordability of health care for workers.

In *Health and Health Care*, the bishops explain that, for the Catholic community, health and the healing ministry take on particular significance because of the Church's involvement as provider of health care services through its various ministries and as a major purchaser of health care insurance for its employees.

In the debate over health care insurance, the bishops will continue to use as their guide the “criteria for reform” from their *Framework for Comprehensive Health Care Reform*. Among the criteria for health care reform they will apply to policy proposals are:

- Respect for Life — Whether it preserves and enhances human life from conception to natural death.
- Priority Concern for the Poor – Whether it gives special priority to health care needs of the poor, ensuring that their health care is quality health care.
- Universal Access to Comprehensive Benefits — Whether it provides universal access to comprehensive benefits sufficient to maintain and promote good health.
- Pursuing the Common Good and Preserving Pluralism — Whether it allows and encourages the involvement of all sectors, including the religious and voluntary sectors, in all aspects of health care, ensuring respect for the ethical and religious values of consumers and providers.

The bishops urge national leaders to look beyond special interests and partisanship and to unite our nation in a “new commitment to meeting the health care needs of our people, especially the poor and vulnerable.”



Social thinking and social practice inspired by the Gospel must always be marked by a special sensitivity towards those most in distress. (Pope John Paul II)

Facts About Health Care in the U.S.

- 45 million Americans, 15.6% of the population, or almost one out of six people were uninsured in 2003 -- an increase of 1.4 million from the year before
- more than 8 million children do not have health care insurance (2003)
- 73.2% of all the uninsured were members of working families (2003)
- 19.4% of African-Americans, 32.7% of Hispanics, and 34.5% of immigrants did not have health insurance (2003)
- Insurance premiums increased an average of 10.9% in 2001, 12.9% in 2002, 13.9% in 2003, and 11.2% in 2004
- 8 out of 10 of the non-elderly uninsured are from working families and 70% are in families with at least one full-time worker



Resources

- *Peace on Earth*, Pope John XXIII, (April 1963)
- *Health and Health Care, A Pastoral Letter of the American Catholic Bishops*, (United States Catholic Conference, Nov. 19, 1981)
- *A Framework for Comprehensive Health Care Reform, Protecting Life, Promoting Human Dignity, Pursuing the Common Good* (A Resolution of the Catholic Bishops of the United States, June 18, 1983)
- *Putting Children and Families First, A Challenge for Our Church, Nation, and World*, (United States Catholic Conference, Nov. 1991)

What You Can Do

As part of the Catholic Campaign for Health Care For All! you can:

Pray for the sick and vulnerable, especially those who do not have access to health care

Learn about Catholic social teaching and how it is applied to health care. Read the bishops' statements: *Health and Health Care* (1981), and *A Framework for Comprehensive Health Care Reform* (1993). Go to the USCCB <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/index.htm> and CHA <http://www.chausa.org/> web sites for more information about Catholic advocacy on health care.

Educate people in your parish or community about Catholic social teaching and health care. Visit websites for information about the state of health care in the U.S. and proposals to reform the health care system. If there is a Catholic health care ministry in your area, find out what challenges they face in serving the poor.

Advocate improvements in the health care system. Contact your elected officials and share with them Catholic teaching on health care and the principles and priorities the bishops use in assessing health care proposals. Join your parish, diocesan or state legislative network.

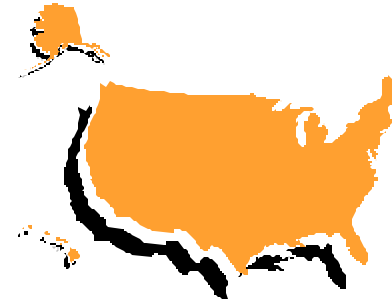
Through this campaign, and working with the Catholic Health Association, Catholic Charities USA and other segments of the Catholic community, we hope to prepare Catholics to advocate for (1) continued public commitment to health care for low income children and families, the elderly, and people with disabilities; and (2) changes in our health care system - from small improvements to major restructuring - that will lead to health care for all.

The USCCB Office for Domestic Social Development will produce educational and advocacy materials to help individuals, parishes and dioceses work for improvements in the health care system. Go to our website www.usccb.org/sdwp for more information.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is launching an effort to unite Catholics around a common message:

***In this, the wealthiest of nations,
it is unacceptable that so many people do not have
access to
affordable health care.***

Health Care For All!



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