

# Health Care for the Homeless Mobilizer

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council

P.O. Box 60427  
Nashville, TN 37206-0427

E-mail: [council@nhchc.org](mailto:council@nhchc.org)  
Website: [www.nhchc.org](http://www.nhchc.org)

Telephone 615/226-2292  
Fax 615/226-1656

Vol. XIV No. 1

1/9/09

## ***Ring in the New Congress*** Call your Representative about Health Care Reform *National Single Payer Call-in Day*

The brand new 111<sup>th</sup> Congress convened on Tuesday, January 6 with an ambitious agenda filled with more than a few New Year's resolutions for change. Without question, health care reform will be a hot topic of debate during the next three months, and the single payer solution needs to be part of the conversation. Congressman Conyers (D-MI) plans to reintroduce H.R. 676, the National Health Insurance Act, and — with the help of advocates — lobby actively for Congressional endorsement. To support this effort, advocates have scheduled a series of *Single Payer National Call-in Days* to encourage Members of Congress to co-sponsor H.R. 676. The next scheduled call-in day is January 15, specifically targeting Members in their Washington, DC offices. The National Health Care for the Homeless Council encourages *Mobilizer* readers to ring in the New Year by ringing your Representative on January 15 to advocate for single payer health care reform.

### **Top Ten Reasons to Support Single Payer Health Care**

1. **Everyone has health care coverage.** When everyone is in the same risk pool through a system guaranteeing universal health care coverage, everyone has access to the same health care services.
2. **Cost savings.** Eliminating wasteful administrative costs (private insurance companies spend approximately 30% of health dollars on administrative costs) and investing in preventive care will help to reduce health care spending and create greater financial efficiency throughout the health care system.
3. **Promotion of preventive care.** When people are uninsured or underinsured, they often go without primary and preventive care — which are far less expensive than emergency and episodic care. With national health insurance, everyone would be able seek care when it is needed, rather than waiting until their health deteriorates and relying on emergency rooms for care.
4. **Improved health outcomes.** According to the World Health Organization, the U.S. ranks 37<sup>th</sup> in health performance compared to other countries (life expectancy, infant mortality, etc). People experiencing homelessness have an average life expectancy

of 47 years.<sup>1</sup> A national health care system would improve overall health and provide a better quality of life for our society.

5. **Strengthened Community Health Centers and HCH projects.** If people who are served by community health centers and HCH projects are insured, their health care providers will be assured a more stable source of funding that allows them to meet their clients' needs more comprehensively.
6. **Reduced health disparities.** In order to eliminate the documented health disparities among economically disadvantaged populations and people of color, we must first begin to address disparities in health insurance coverage. Among the more than 700,000 homeless individuals served by HCH projects, at least 70% lack health insurance. A national health system where everyone has access to the same health care services would provide a foundation from which to address additional disparities.
7. **A strengthened economy.** The U.S. spends twice as much as other industrialized nations on health care (\$7,129 per capita). Excessive health care spending undermines our global competitiveness. With our sinking economy, more and more employers are cutting back on health care benefits or eliminating benefits altogether because they can no longer afford high premium costs. A national health care system would allow employers to promote a strong and healthy workforce and help the U.S. to remain economically competitive with other countries.
8. **Portability.** Under H.R. 676, health insurance would remain an individual guarantee and would not be tied to employment status; this would allow unemployed persons and those who lose or change jobs to obtain and retain health care coverage.
9. **Choice.** Americans want to choose their doctors, not their insurance companies. In fact, most private insurance plans determine from whom and where one may seek health care services. With a single payer health care system – essentially a single health insurer – true choice of medical providers would be returned to the individual.
10. **It is what Americans want!** Opinion polls consistently show that Americans want a universal health care system – everyone in and nobody out. The administrative cost savings achieved through a single payer system are necessary to promote health coverage for all.

#### **ACTION:**

- **Read the Council's 2008 policy statement on universal health care**  
<http://www.nhchc.org/Advocacy/PolicyPapers/UniversalHealthCareHomelessness2008.pdf>
- **Contact your Representative on January 15** to tell them that a publicly-financed and privately-delivered national health care system structured around a

---

<sup>1</sup> O'Connell, James. *Premature Mortality in Homeless Populations: A Review of the Literature*. December 2005.

“single payer” financing mechanism is the best way to provide comprehensive, high quality, and affordable health care coverage to everybody in the United States. Ask your Representative to co-sponsor John Conyers’ proposal for health care reform, H.R. 676 (The National Health Insurance Act). To find who represents you go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or call the Capitol Switchboard at 202- 224-3121. ***Involve your staff, clients, and Board in this national call-in day!***

- **Vote for single payer health care!** Change.org is organizing an *Ideas for Change in America* competition to identify the best ideas for change in America. The top 10 ideas will be presented to the Obama administration just before Inauguration Day and will form the basis of a nationwide advocacy campaign to turn each idea into actual policy. Single payer health care is the leading health care proposal for which participants in this competition have voted to date. Go to [http://www.change.org/ideas/view/free\\_single\\_payer\\_health\\_care](http://www.change.org/ideas/view/free_single_payer_health_care) to become part of the competition, and click on “vote now” to add your vote.
- **For more information** contact the National Council’s Health Policy Organizer, Adrienne Breidenstine, at [abreidenstine@hchmd.org](mailto:abreidenstine@hchmd.org) or 443-703-1337.

**SUBSCRIBE TO THE HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS MOBILIZER**

\$15 per year by fax, free by e-mail.

Please pass this on to your colleagues, clients, and Board of Directors.