

HEALTH CARE PERSPECTIVES IN BRIEF

Use Competition to Make the System More Efficient

The main problem with the health care system is that costs keep going up. All the other problems in the health care system stem from this and won't be solved until we give everyone real choices and the ability to take responsibility for what they spend on care. That means reducing regulation and using free market competition to allow insurers to offer a wider range of plans. We should also embrace managed care, which watches expenses carefully and has already slowed down the increase in health care costs. By moving further in the direction of managed care, and adopting medical savings accounts, which encourage individuals to save and shop around for health care, we'll be able to bring down costs and cover more people.

Expand the Current System to Cover More People

We don't need to rip up the existing health care system and start over. We already have the best high-tech medical centers in the world and insurance programs in place that cover 85 percent of Americans. We can just extend those proven programs, public and private, to cover more people. We can also give employers financial incentives to cover more of their employees. The federal government already has effective health programs for the elderly (Medicare), the poor (Medicaid), low-income children (CHIP) and its own employees. If we expand the eligibility for those plans, we'll be able to cover more uninsured people with the least disruption to those who already have insurance. Gradually expanding the current system is the most practical way to cover more people without breaking the budget.

Create a National Health Care System

Decent health care ought to be a basic right, not something that depends on the job you hold. Our patchwork health care system of private insurance and government programs simply isn't working. It's time to try what Canada and most European countries already have: a national, government-run health care system. The system would work much like Medicare, except that everyone would be entitled to coverage, regardless of age, income or job status. Like Medicare, you'd still pick your own doctor, but the government would get the bill. We've debated what to do about health care for years, but nothing else has solved the problem. This is the only way to solve the problem of the uninsured, once and for all.