

PRESS STATEMENT

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A Pathway to Enactment of Health Reform

Statement of Ralph G. Neas
CEO National Coalition on Health Care (NCHC) Action Fund
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10:30 a.m.

Good morning! On behalf of this extraordinary coalition of coalitions, welcome to our press conference.

My name is Ralph G. Neas, Chief Executive Officer of the National Coalition on Health Care Action Fund. I am joined by Ron Pollack, Executive Director of Families USA; Richard Kirsch, National Campaign Director of Health Care for America Now (HCAN); Mary Andrus, representing the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities; Jack Lewin, CEO of the American College of Cardiology; Terry Gardiner, National Policy Director of Small Business Majority; Brent Wilkes, National Executive Director of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); and Mary Wilson, President, League of Women Voters of the United States.

The effort to fix our dysfunctional, inequitable and unsustainable health system is at a crucial juncture. Without prompt and decisive leadership, defeat, as it has for over a century, will again prevail over reform.

We cannot applaud enough the courageous and effective leadership demonstrated by President Obama and the Congressional leadership in achieving passage of reform bills by both the House and the Senate. In less than one year, more progress was made than had been accomplished in the past 100 years.

But, now is not the time to change course. Rather it is the time to redouble our efforts to enact comprehensive health system reform.

First and foremost, the campaign to enact a comprehensive bill that would produce sustainable reform must continue unabated. Because every element of the health

system is interrelated and interdependent, piecemeal reform—especially a cherry picking approach—not only is not feasible but could make matters worse. Incrementalism simply could do more harm than good.

Next, we would like to recommend a possible pathway to prompt enactment of the health reform legislation that all America urgently needs:

1. Continue the White House-Senate-House compromise negotiations without further interruptions.
2. Finish the negotiations as soon as possible and -- consistent with the rules of Congress -- incorporate those agreements into a Budget Reconciliation measure.
3. Then the Senate could take up the Reconciliation “corrections” measure and pass it by majority vote, even before the House of Representatives votes on the Senate-passed reform bill.
4. After Senate passage of the “corrections” measure, the House could pass both the Reconciliation bill and the Senate-passed health reform bill.
5. Both the health reform bill and the Reconciliation measure then could be sent to the President.

Numerous precedents and different sequences exist for such a process.

Often it has been said that failure to enact a comprehensive health care reform law would be a political disaster for those elected officials who have supported such legislation.

We believe that to be correct.

But, most importantly, failure to act promptly would be a disaster for the nation:

- It would be a disaster for the hundreds of millions of Americans who everyday experience anxiety about the security of their health care plans and who dread the ever escalating rate of yearly increases in health care costs.
- It would be a disaster for the tens of millions of Americans who lack health insurance coverage.
- It would be a disaster for the American economy. Runaway health care costs are bankrupting our families, our businesses, and our governments.

As so many leading economists have stated, controlling skyrocketing annual health care cost increases is essential to fixing our national economy.

America, right now, needs quality, affordable and sustainable health care for all. Only a failure of political will can keep America from having what every other industrialized nation in the world already has.

Supporters of the “Legislative Pathway” Strategy include but are not limited to:

National Coalition on Health Care Action Fund
Families USA
Health Care for America Now (HCAN)
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
SEIU
American College of Cardiology
Americas Agenda: Health Care for All
California Public Employees’ Retirement System (CalPERS)
Change to Win
Doctors for America
Easter Seals
Japanese American Citizens League
League of United Latin American Citizens
League of Women Voters
Mainstreet Alliance
National Consumers League
National Physicians Alliance
Public Sector HealthCare Roundtable
Raising Women’s Voice for the Health Care We Need
Small Business Majority

The NCHC Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) not for profit organization devoted to public education, and advocacy to secure stable affordable health care for America. The National Coalition on Health Care, the oldest and most diverse alliance of groups committed to securing and sustaining health care system reform, is a 501(c)(3) organization. This statement reflects a consensus of the members of the National Coalition Health Care (NCHC) but some Coalition members do not, or cannot, take positions either on specific legislation, strategies or on any policies outside their respective mission areas. Not every member of NCHC has a position on or supports every position of the NCHC Action Fund. However, all that can endorse broad policy positions do support comprehensive health system reform. Both organizations are located at 1120 G Street, NW, Suite 810, Washington, DC 20005. Phone: (202) 638-7151.