



Memo to: Delegates, Alternate Delegates, Physician Leaders

From: AMA Board of Trustees

Date: November, 2007

Subject: AMA's National Health Care Policy Agenda (Resolution 607)

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In response to Resolution 607 adopted by the House of Delegates at I-06, and with assistance from the House of Delegates through the Discussion Forum at A-07, the Board of Trustees has developed the AMA's National Health Care Policy Agenda (attached). This document outlines the priority health issues that candidates for Congress and President should address in the 2008 elections. Health system reform is one of the top issues in next year's elections. Medicine must play an active role to inform and influence this crucial debate.

We encourage you to share the AMA's National Health Care Policy Agenda with your colleagues, family, friends, staff, local civic groups and patients.

In the coming days, every incumbent Member of Congress and the candidates for President will receive a copy of the AMA's National Health Care Policy Agenda urging them to support proposals to implement these important goals. In addition, we will widely distribute the AMA's National Health Care Policy Agenda to the media. The AMA's National Health Care Policy Agenda will also be used to develop questionnaires for congressional candidates seeking support from organized medicine.

**AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
NATIONAL HEALTH CARE POLICY AGENDA  
November 2007**

The American Medical Association (AMA) believes that all Americans are worthy of a fair and affordable health system.

Today, Americans are faced with a fragmented health system. Millions don't visit a doctor until their illness reaches a serious stage. As a nation, we can and should do better.

At the center of the AMA's vision is the concept that every American, regardless of means, has health insurance. And every patient maintains the freedom to choose his or her own doctors and health plans, and maintains control over his or her own care. For a senior, this includes having ready access to doctors in the Medicare program. For a pregnant woman, it means finding a physician who hasn't been forced out of business by high liability insurance rates. And for everyone, it means receiving the best care possible. Specifically:

- The AMA urges lawmakers to implement a system of tax credits to enable individuals to buy health insurance. We have a detailed proposal for this system.
- Under current law, Medicare will make deep cuts in payments to doctors every year until 2015. This policy erodes patient access to care and is a barrier to practice innovations. Congress and the next Administration need to permanently replace the flawed payment formula.
- Medical lawsuits are driving up health costs for everyone and making it hard for many to find a doctor. The AMA seeks reasonable limits on the noneconomic damages juries can award so that doctors aren't forced to move, cut services or go out of business.

Physicians and other health providers must work with government and private payers on strategies to restrain rising health care costs while maintaining quality of care. Medical science and technology have moved forward at a lightning pace. Patients are ready for the American health system to follow suit. The AMA is committed to:

- Finding new ways to enable doctors to use promising new technology
- Pioneering new methods to measure and improve the quality of care
- Preventing errors by studying ones that have happened, without the threat of lawsuits
- Directing more resources and effort toward disease prevention
- Helping Americans lead more healthful lifestyles
- Eliminating gaps in care, particularly for racial and ethnic minority patients, the elderly, and low-income families
- Preparing better for large-scale health care emergencies

Today, patients are forced to endure miles of insurance company red tape and piecemeal policy attempts to solve one problem or another. America's patients will be best served when our country eliminates the disproportionate influence of insurers and government into medical decision-making. These important decisions must be placed in the hands of the patient and the physician.

Our nation needs a well-trained medical work force, and more doctors in primary care. We must make sure our medical education stays the best in the world, and make paying for it less burdensome. So too must we address the barriers that threaten the viability of many physician practices, such as:

- Payments that fail to reflect the true cost of providing care
- Health insurers' deceptive business practices
- Antitrust rules that restrict doctors from negotiating with health insurance companies

As physicians and medical students, we see firsthand every day how urgently our patients need a better health system. Together, we can shape one America truly deserves.