

## **I'm Young. I'm Progressive. Why Should I Care About Health Reform?** *Health Care and America's Youth*

### **The Hard Facts: Why It's Time for America's Youth to Say YES!**

#### **Did you know?**

There are **13 million** young adults (ages 19 to 29) without health insurance and **750,000** in New York ([www.commonwealthfund.org](http://www.commonwealthfund.org)).

**Young adults have the highest uninsured rate (30%)** of any age group ([www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)). More than half of uninsured young adults are full-time workers, but low incomes, jobs without benefits, and frequent job changes make it more difficult for them to afford coverage.

In a survey of young people taken last fall by Harvard University's Institute of Politics, **one in 10 respondents ranked health insurance as the national issue that concerns them the most**—only the war in Iraq trumped it as a more pressing concern.

#### *Have you ever . . .*

Had trouble making medical payments?

Been contacted by a collection agency because of an inability to pay medical bills?

Significantly changed your way of life in order to pay medical bills?

Been stuck paying off medical debt over time?

**\*\*\*These are all issues that health insurance can solve!\*\*\***

### **I'm Young. I'm Healthy. What's At Risk?**

#### **Accidents**

- ❖ Unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide accounted for 70 percent of deaths among young adults 18 to 29. Young adults also have one of the highest rates of injury-related emergency department visits of all age groups (CDC, 2008).

#### **Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

- ❖ 45 percent of young women between the ages of 20 and 24 in the U.S. were infected with HPV, which can cause cervical cancer. Approximately 19 million new STD infections occur each year – almost half of them among young people 15 to 24 years of age (CDC, 2008).

#### **Lifestyle**

- ❖ A third of 18- to 29-year-olds are cigarette smokers. A quarter are obese, as the rates among young adults have tripled in the past three decades. Nearly two-thirds of young adults reported not having regular leisure-time physical activity (CDC, 2008).

**HEALTH CARE IS A RIGHT, NOT A PRIVILEGE.**

## ***How Can Young Americans Get Involved with the Health Care Reform?***

- ❖ Go to the website <http://www.healthreform.gov/support.html> and state your support towards President Obama's commitment to a comprehensive health reform by signing up to send the following automated email.

*Dear Mr. President,*

*We strongly support your commitment to comprehensive health reform.*

*This is not a luxury. The continuing, sharp escalation of health care costs for families, businesses, and government is unsustainable. Reform is imperative.*

*We believe that health reform must be enacted this year.*

*Reform is needed to help America's families struggling with rising costs and those who are losing their insurance. At the same time, real health reform is crucial to keeping American businesses competitive in the world economy and for the country's long-term economic viability. As our country faces economic challenges, the time for reform is now.*

*We support health reform that follows these principles:*

- *Protect families' financial health*
- *Assure affordable, quality health coverage for all Americans*
- *Provide portability of coverage*
- *Guarantee choice of doctors*
- *Invest in prevention and wellness*
- *Improve patient safety and quality of care*
- *End barriers to coverage for people with pre-existing medical conditions*
- *Reduce long-term growth of health costs for businesses and government*

*During these extraordinarily challenging times, we need to put aside past differences and address the health and economic crisis. Our shared interest must come before narrow interests so we can achieve a health system that is affordable and provides high quality for all Americans. We will support your budget with its reserve fund dedicated to achieving health care reform in a fiscally responsible manner. Each of us must be prepared to contribute to achieving this fundamental goal.*

*By signing this statement we affirm our commitment to work with you and our Congressional leaders to enact legislation this year which provides affordable, high quality coverage for all Americans.*