

TALKING POINTS - CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS

THE CLINTON PLAN

- President Clinton will present a proposal for comprehensive health care reform to the Congress in May. His plan will offer a bold new direction that will improve access to care, control costs, and maintain the high quality Americans expect.
- The proposal will be based on the following principles:

Access for All: Americans -- legal residents and citizens -- will be guaranteed coverage without regard to where they live, how much they earn, whether and where they are employed, and whether they have a so-called pre-existing condition.

Benefits: The Clinton plan will guarantee a comprehensive benefit package and support community-based delivery systems which are sensitive to the needs of the communities they serve. Preventive and primary care will be the centerpiece of health care in America. No longer will we rely on emergency and episodic care.

Security: The Clinton plan will provide Americans with the security of knowing that wherever they move or whenever they change jobs, coverage will be available for them and their families.

Continuity: The Clinton Plan will maintain the best of our system and improve it, through support for the public health institutions, Community and Migrant Health Centers, and traditional community providers. The plan will strengthen public health institutions that provide the backbone for the care of special populations unable or unwilling to use health plans regularly.

Simplicity and Affordability: People will know what they are getting, how much it will cost them, and how to use it.

- The policy development effort is now in its narrowing and audit phase. Working groups in earlier phases put all options "on the table" so that all issues were considered, discussed, and evaluated. The current phase synthesizes all this work and begins a systematic check of the recommendations and all the legal issues that must be addressed in implementing the Clinton plan, before putting options before the President.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
(Health Care Reform and Undocumented Persons)

Will the undocumented be covered in the Clinton Plan?

There is a growing misperception that the reform plan would take away services from certain populations currently receiving care. The current system protects undocumented persons; under the reform plan those protections would continue. Services ranging from care at community clinics to hospital services would still be available. Moreover, these safety net programs that this population relies upon would be enhanced to improve the availability of services. However, coverage for guaranteed benefits will be limited to legal residents and American citizens.

Will undocumented children be covered?

Services for undocumented children will also be preserved as under current law. (Note: If asked before previous question use response above)

Will counties and states receive uncompensated care funding to cover the undocumented and other disenfranchised populations?

The Clinton Plan will continue and strengthen investments in our public health institutions and programs. The President and the Task Force are considering several options for improving health promotion and health care delivery by assuring that providers have the resources they need to provide services to targeted populations.

Will there be a universal card?

We understand your concerns about using a universal card for enrollment in the health care plan. We look forward to working with you in developing guidelines for ensuring confidentiality and eliminating the risk of discrimination.

"HOT" BUTTON ISSUES

1. Sensitivity to the term "CITIZEN."

When dealing with this community, you may prefer to use the terms "LEGAL RESIDENTS AND CITIZENS" together and in that order at all times. This will help avoid an adverse reaction to the term "CITIZEN" which connotes excluding a large part of the Hispanic population.

2. Sensitivity to the term "ILLEGAL ALIEN."

You may prefer to use the term "UNDOCUMENTED PERSONS."

3. Will currently covered "undocumented persons" lose that coverage?

SUGGESTED RESPONSE: Under reform, we will retain current law that covers "undocumented persons" and we will strengthen the safety net programs for vulnerable populations.

4. Why aren't we including "undocumented persons" in the health plans, if we plan to pay for enhancing the current public health system?

SUGGESTED RESPONSE: Health care reform must enhance the health of all communities, so we must support and improve the public health system. Undocumented persons are some of the most highly mobile in our society. A strong public health system will ensure that all people wherever they are and wherever they go have access to services.

5. Will a health security card become a model for a national identification card and allow certain individuals to be discriminated against in many Federal programs because of their immigration status?

SUGGESTED RESPONSE: That's not the intention of the health security card. It is to provide everyone with access to health care services wherever they are. We are meeting with concerned organizations to ensure that appropriate safeguards are developed and instituted. We look forward to your specific suggestions.

6. **Will states or local governments control the funding for the public health and safety net programs?**

SUGGESTED RESPONSE: Protections will be put in place which guarantee the participation of all government levels in the decision-making processes, local/county governments and health providers.

7. **Will Puerto Ricans receive the same health benefits package as everyone else?**

ISSUE: The United States/Puerto Rico relationship is an emotional issue to Puerto Ricans. Although Puerto Rico is a territory and a part of this country, residents felt that they are treated as second class citizens. They want to be treated equally and included in the new health care system.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE: All legal residents and citizens will be guaranteed coverage without regard to where they live, how much they earn, whether and where they are employed, and whether they have a so-called preexisting condition. Puerto Ricans are United States citizens and therefore will be treated as such.

(You may prefer to avoid reference to the status of Puerto Rico as a territory or as "dependent" on the United States to avoid an adverse reaction.)