

HEALTH CARE AND THE
PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN
EXCERPTS FROM THE CANDIDATES' WEB SITES

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GEORGE BUSH

HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT

- **Association Health Plans (AHPs) will help small businesses provide affordable health insurance coverage to their workers.** AHPs will give America's working families greater access to affordable health insurance by allowing small businesses to band together through trade groups and negotiate on behalf of their employees and their families.
- Millions of low-income Americans made eligible for coverage. Since January 2001, the Department of Health and Human Services has helped states extend coverage to an estimated 2.6 million low-income Americans eligible under Medicaid and the State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) by granting states waivers and approving state plan amendments.

GEORGE BUSH

HEALTHCARE AND SENIORS

- **All seniors will be guaranteed access to affordable prescription drug coverage under Medicare.** In December 2003, President Bush signed into law legislation that will make Medicare prescription drug coverage available to 40 million seniors and people with disabilities. The new benefit will become available on January 1, 2006. Beginning in June 2004, beneficiaries will have access to Medicare-approved prescription drug discount cards, which will save them 10 - 25 percent off the retail price of most prescription drugs. Low-income beneficiaries also will receive \$600 to help them purchase their medicines.
- All seniors will have more choices and better benefits under a strengthened and improved Medicare program. In addition to helping seniors afford their prescriptions, the legislation the President signed enhances basic Medicare coverage by providing better preventive care and disease management services. Beginning in 2006, seniors also will get the same kinds of choices the Members of Congress and federal employees have to select the coverage that is best for them, including the choice of keeping their Medicare coverage just the way it is.

GEORGE BUSH HEALTHCARE LEGAL REFORM

The Plan to Improve Health Care

- **Medical liability reform will help improve health care quality and slow the rise in health care costs.** President Bush believes these needed reforms will increase access to quality, affordable health care for all Americans, while reducing frivolous and time-consuming legal proceedings against doctors and health care providers that are driving good providers out of communities across the country.

GEORGE BUSH HEALTH CARE AND TAX ADVANTAGES

- **Millions of Americans will get help with their out-of-pocket medical expenses through health savings accounts (HSAs).** The Medicare bill that President Bush signed into law will enable people who purchase high-deductible health insurance coverage to establish health savings accounts. These tax-exempt, portable accounts will help families pay their routine medical expenses and provide a tax-preferred means of saving for future health care needs.
- **New health insurance deductions will make coverage more affordable to millions of Americans whose employers don't provide health benefits.** The President's proposal will allow individuals who establish HSAs to deduct the premiums they pay for their high-deductible health insurance policies. This new deduction will be available to taxpayers whether or not they itemize. It will reduce the net cost of these policies and encourage the use of HSAs for making wise, cost-effective health care choices.
- **Refundable tax credits will make health insurance more affordable to millions of low-income Americans.** The President has proposed to establish refundable tax credits of up to \$1,000 for individuals and \$3,000 for families to help low-income workers buy health insurance coverage.

GEORGE BUSH HEALTHCARE AND SCIENCE

- **Increased funding for bio-defense preparedness is strengthening our homeland security and improving public health surveillance.** The President has provided nearly \$4.5 billion to states, local governments and hospitals for a bio-terrorist attack.
- **Doubling the budget of the National Institutes of Health will lead to better health care for all Americans.** President Bush fulfilled a commitment by

completing the historic doubling of the NIH budget by 2003, dramatically increasing medical research funded by NIH to speed cures and treatments for the diseases that plague our nation and the world.

GEORGE BUSH

RURAL HEALTH

- Vulnerable populations who live in medically underserved areas have gained greater access to medical services. To fulfill a commitment to create 1,200 new and expanded health center sites to serve an additional 6.1 million people by 2006, the President has dramatically increased funding to commit health centers to help individuals that live in underserved and rural areas, including many people that are uninsured, low income individuals, migrant farm workers, homeless individuals, and children.

John Kerry

Health Insurance and Employment

For Small Businesses

Health care costs are rising about 15 percent this year for small businesses and often as high as 25 percent. Small businesses are much less likely to offer health care coverage because it tends to be more expensive for them. Small businesses have administrative costs and they often see premiums rise when one employee has high health care costs. By joining the new Congressional Health Plan under Kerry's plan small businesses will be able to provide more affordable coverage. Kerry is also proposing refundable tax credits up to 50 percent of coverage to small businesses and their employees to help subsidize the cost of health insurance.

For Workers In Between Jobs

There are approximately 8 million unemployed people in the United States today. John Kerry believes that when you lose your job you shouldn't lose your health care. That is why he is proposing a 75 percent tax credit to assure workers can keep their health insurance between jobs.

Give Every American Access to the Same Plan As Members of Congress

Nine million Federal employees get health care through the Federal Employees Health Care Benefits program (FEHBP), which offers a wide range of plans with good benefits. The Kerry plan will allow every American access to this system. With tax-based incentives to employers and tax credits to individuals and the self-employed, the Kerry plan will ensure that this coverage is affordable. The most vulnerable groups, including the unemployed and retirees below age 65, will be covered. To hold down premiums, the federal government will reimburse companies for 75 percent of catastrophic claims totaling more than \$50,000, provided they pass the savings on to their policyholders.

A New Approach to Control Spiraling Health Care Costs

Workers cannot afford health insurance premiums that are rising ten times as fast as wages. John Kerry has a comprehensive plan to stop spiraling health care costs, including providing relief for the highest cost cases. In 2001, only 4/10 of one percent of private insurance claims were for individuals with health expenses in excess of \$50,000. However, these claims accounted for nearly 20 percent of medical expenses for private insurers. Under Kerry's proposal companies and insurers that guarantee a pass-through of the savings to their workers through reduced premiums, would be reimbursed for 75 percent of catastrophic costs above \$50,000. To be eligible for this relief, employers would have to: provide affordable health coverage to all their workers; demonstrate they will pass through savings of up to \$1000 to workers; and encourage disease management to improve and hold down the cost of care.

John Kerry

Seniors and Americans Age 55 to 64

Retirees and Americans age 55 to 64 have the hardest time buying coverage. Gaps in our patchwork system of health care are most noticeable for those Americans that risk losing their health care before they turn 65 and are eligible for Medicare. This less healthy population is often priced out of affordable coverage. Kerry's plan will allow these Americans to buy into the Congressional health plan at an affordable price and give a tax credit to make it even more affordable.

Protecting Medicare

John Kerry will never balance the budget on the backs of America's seniors. Other candidates have supported major cuts that cause premium increases and cutbacks in benefits. John Kerry won't. Kerry will fight for quality care in all parts of the country – rural and urban. Kerry will make sure that seniors get quality care no matter where you live. John Kerry will implement a real prescription drug benefit in Medicare and he will never force seniors into HMOs.

Prescriptions

- We should allow patients to reimport more affordable safe prescriptions that will save Americans 33 to 80 percent on prescription drugs.
- The Bush Medicare reform explicitly does not allow Medicare to negotiate better prices for prescription drugs, or allow seniors to buy prescriptions from Canada.
- John Kerry will change the Medicare law to assure that the Federal government can negotiate better prices for prescription drugs.
- Medicaid gets a set discount of about 20 percent and the Veterans program negotiates discounts of about 40 percent discounts on prescription drugs. Kerry will direct his Secretary of Health and Human Services to make sure that seniors across the country are getting at least the 20 percent discount and Medicare is not paying more for prescriptions than the private sector in any region of the country.
- Pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) process hundreds of millions of pharmaceutical claims per year and manage drug benefits for more than 200 million Americans. In addition to the discounts they get from bulk buying, drug manufacturers typically pay these pharmacy middlemen billions of dollars in extra fees. John Kerry's plan would require pharmacy middlemen that do business with the Federal government to clearly show what extra dollars that are receiving from the industry.
- As President, John Kerry would help states provide discounts to other populations. Kerry would also give states incentives to implement more efficient contracting to obtain better rates for prescription drugs

John Kerry

Children and Health

Health Coverage for Every Child: A New Deal to Provide Health Coverage to Every Child. Kerry's plan would assure that the Federal government picks up the cost of the nearly 20 million kids enrolled in Medicaid in exchange for states covering kids in the Children's Health Insurance Program.

- **All Children Are Eligible:** Kerry's swap plan would require states to cover children in families making up to \$60,000; eliminate the current 5-year waiting period for eligibility for legal immigrant pregnant women and children; and enable children with disabilities to keep their health care coverage when their parents return to work.
- **Assuring Automatic Enrollment:** The Kerry plan would assure every child gets health care coverage by automatic enrolling kids when they come to school with a simple form. Since the Federal government would be picking up the costs for these kids, this would not undermine states' fiscal situation.

Guaranteed Health Care for Every Child

Studies show that kids without health insurance are less likely to get checkups or treatment for ear infections or asthma. Kids without health care also have a harder time learning in school. In a new compact with the states, the Federal government will pick up the cost of Medicaid coverage for children in exchange for automatic enrollment of all school children eligible for the Children's Health Insurance Program. Eligibility for coverage will be extended to 300 percent of poverty-level incomes for children, and coverage will be extended to the six million single and childless adults who are uninsured and live below the poverty line. Independent experts estimate that the Kerry plan will cover 99 percent of America's children.

Food Safety: John Kerry proposed a New "Kids Safety Effort" at the Food and Drug Administration that would require testing for prescriptions used for children and require any food containing a major allergen to be labeled clearly and consistently.

Childhood Obesity: Address the Childhood Obesity Epidemic. John Kerry will launch a program to train health professionals and school administrators and parents to educate them about preventing and treating obesity and encouraging physical activity.

John Kerry Women's Health

☐ Protect the Right to Choose

John Kerry believes that women have the right to control their own bodies, their own lives, and their own destinies. He believes that the Constitution protects their right to choose and to make their own decisions in consultation with their doctor, their conscience, and their God. He will defend this right as President. He recently announced he will support only pro-choice judges to the Supreme Court. Kerry also believes that we should promote family planning and health plans should assure women contraceptive coverage.

☐ Protecting Women's Health

John Kerry has worked to ensure women receive access to health care, and he has focused particular attention on breast cancer research and funding. Kerry was an original cosponsor of the Women's Health Equity Act, which ensures women of all ages receive information and access to the highest quality and most advanced health care. He has worked to require health plans to cover hospital stays for breast cancer treatment and to preserve and increase funding for breast and cervical cancer research.

Kerry supports requiring insurance plans to cover contraception and he will continue to fight for a meaningful Patient's Bill of Rights, which would ensure women direct access to their OB/GYNs.

John Kerry Health Care and Legislation

☐ Making Malpractice Insurance More Affordable

Medical malpractice insurance has become so expensive in some states that physicians are moving or giving up their practices, cutting access to care for their patients. The Kerry plan will hold down malpractice premiums by requiring an impartial review of a claim before an individual could file suit and by eliminating punitive damages except in egregious cases. Kerry's plan will not put a cap on legitimate damage awards.

☐ A Strong Enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights

Some candidates don't believe that the patients' bill of rights matters and that we should just focus on expanding coverage to the uninsured. John Kerry disagrees. He believes that health insurance must be worth something when you need it and he believes that doctors, nurses and patients should make health care decisions, not HMO bureaucrats. That's why he will fight for a strong enforceable patients' bill of rights to

assure patients get access to the specialists they need, can choose their own doctor, have access to a real appeals process, and can hold HMOs accountable when they make mistakes that hurt the patients.

John Kerry Medicine and Science

Support Medical Research and Assure All Americans from Benefit from the More Effective Treatment

New science and medical research has the power to improve and even save many lives. However, it is not a guarantee that Americans will benefit from groundbreaking improvements. George Bush has tried to undermine this research for political reasons. Moreover, we have an erratic health care system that prevents many Americans from getting the best care available. John Kerry has a three-pronged strategy to make sure advances in science and medical research are benefiting American families: (1) Assure we are not undermining the power of science and technology to find new treatments and prevention for our most devastating diseases; (2) Improve our health care system to assure our providers and patients use and get the most effective care; (3) Make sure protections are in place so there are no barriers that prevent patients from receiving care.

Lowering Costs with New Technology

The annual cost of health care in America is \$1.4 trillion. About 25 percent, or \$350 billion, is spent on non-medical items, principally paperwork such as billing and record-keeping. No other industry is so inefficient. This expensive drain on the system can be cut in half with modern technology. Kerry's program will offer a "technology bonus" as an incentive to health care providers and insurers to update their procedures and switch to electronic records.