

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The United States is a world leader in developing new medical technologies, uncovering the mysteries of disease through basic clinical research, training nurses and doctors, and constructing hospitals, clinics, laboratories, and medical schools. People from all over the world come to the United States for specialized training and treatment.

But the health care system, as a whole, is in deep crisis. We are spending too much, and getting too little for our money. Health care spending now consumes more than 14% of our GDP, projected to grow to more than 18% by the end of the decade..without insuring one more person..

Roughly 39 million Americans have no health insurance at all, and another 23 million have only bare bones coverage. Every month, 2 million Americans lose their insurance coverage for some period of time, many to never gain it back. More and more Americans have to give up their regular doctor because their employer cuts back on the health plans they offer in order to cope with rising costs. Millions in rural areas have no access-- insured or not-- to a doctor or hospital. And the quality of American medicine is being threatened by the lack of measurable standards and real accountability in the health care system.

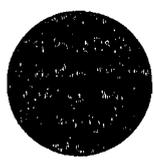
Today's health care system can be particularly inadequate for women. Women are more likely than men to be unemployed, have low income, or work part time, and are therefore more likely to lack health coverage. Even those women with insurance find that their coverage jeopardized by divorce or widowhood, since their insurance is tied to their marital status. And despite the fact that women are the primary victims of life-threatening diseases such as breast and ovarian cancers, women are still at the bottom of our national medical research agenda. Any serious reform proposal must address the health needs of women head on, and provide affordable coverage to all women.

The President has placed women's health concerns at the core of the plan. Under the Health Security Act, all women will be guaranteed coverage regardless of health status, marital status, employment status, or ability to pay. Women will be guaranteed a comprehensive package of benefits that will include unprecedented coverage, without cost-sharing, of a wide range of preventive services, including mammograms, Pap smears, diagnostic services, and prenatal care.

In addition, new research initiatives will concentrate on child health (including birth defects, prenatal care, and adolescent health), and illnesses that primarily strike women -- including breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and osteoporosis. And the new home health and community based long-term care program will provide greater choice and flexibility for older women and will help reduce the undue burden born by many women caregivers.

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Call Christine Heenan
early Wed. a.m.
to tell her this
letter is fine - do go over w/



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The time for health care reform has come, and the passage of the Health Security Act will usher in much needed attention to women's health and wellness. I look forward to working closely with the League in the weeks and months ahead to advance our shared commitment to this goal.