

# 12 Things You Need to Know About America's Health Care Troubles

1. Nearly 47 million Americans are uninsured (ages 0-64 yrs), 9 mil. are kids. 74% of uninsured are from working families.<sup>1</sup>
2. About 245 million Americans have some type of health insurance—yet many are one pink slip, one premium increase, or one illness away from being uninsured.<sup>2</sup>
3. Wages increased 4% last year while health insurance premiums increased 14% & family policy premiums are expected to average \$14,500, annually (2006). Number making above \$75,000/yr. & lost insurance rose to 28% in 2006.<sup>3</sup>
4. The 6th leading cause of death is “being uninsured.”<sup>4</sup> Without insurance you won't receive the care you need, and, if admitted to a hospital, you're more likely to die as opposed to a person with health insurance. About 18,000 people die each year simply because they lack access to health care.<sup>5</sup>
5. US ranks 2nd worst among Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, & UK for Emergency Room wait times.<sup>6</sup>
6. 1 in 10 married women ages 50-64 become uninsured when their husbands turn 65 and retire.<sup>7</sup>
7. US spends the highest portion of its gross domestic product (GDP) on health care (16% or \$6,102 per person) yet ranks last among industrialized nations in quality of health indicators & ranks 37<sup>th</sup> worst among all nations.<sup>8</sup>
8. US taxpayers now fund 60% of our health care PLUS have to pay insurance premiums, deductibles, co-pays & out-of-pocket for care. Canadian taxpayers fund 70% of their health care & pay ZERO more to get comprehensive preventative & catastrophic health coverage.<sup>9</sup>
9. 30% of your health care dollars go toward insurance companies administrative & marketing costs and profits—instead of patient care. The US prides itself on efficiency yet our health care system is anything but! We have thousands of insurance companies and tens of thousand of insurance plans. It is confusing for patients and providers and very inefficient.<sup>10</sup>
10. Bad medical outcomes! We have the worst population-based health care outcomes in the industrialized world. For example, our life expectancy is the lowest in the industrialized world.<sup>11</sup> To a large extent, this is because there are no system-wide standards of care or standards for reporting and investigating errors. It is estimated that over 700,000 Americans die each year in from preventable medical errors in hospitals.<sup>12</sup>
11. There were 2,084 health care lobbyists registered with the federal government in 2005. With 535 members of Congress, that's 3.895 lobbyists per member.<sup>13</sup>
12. Americans pride themselves on having common sense. So think about this: *The U.S. wastes more on health care bureaucracy than it would cost to provide health care to all of the uninsured. Administrative expenses will consume at least \$399.4 billion out of total health expenditures of \$1,660.5 billion in 2003. Streamlining administrative overhead to Canadian levels would save approximately \$286 billion in 2003, \$6,940 for each of the 41.2 million Americans who were uninsured as of 2001. This is substantially more than would be needed to provide full insurance coverage.*<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup>US Census; <sup>2</sup>Ibid; <sup>3</sup>SEIU/imahealthcarevoter.org; <sup>4</sup>U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services; <sup>5</sup>Institute of Medicine ; <sup>6</sup>"Mirror, Mirror on the Wall" Commonwealth Fund, 5/07;

<sup>7</sup>SEIU/imahealthcarevoter.org; <sup>8</sup>"Mirror, Mirror on the Wall" Commonwealth Fund, 5/07; <sup>9</sup>"Liberal Benefits, Conservative Spending" Oncology Issues, Nov/Dec 2003; <sup>10</sup>www.healthcareforall.org;

<sup>11</sup>World Health Organization; <sup>12</sup>www.ahrq.gov/data/hcup/hcupnet.htm; <sup>13</sup>Ctr. For Responsive Politics www.opensecrets.org; <sup>14</sup>Medical News Today, 5/28/04

***We can do better. Join THCC in our efforts for sensible health care solutions.***

**Tennessee Health Care Campaign**

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