

Bush Watch

Health Care

When it comes to jobs and the economy, the Bush administration often uses fuzzy math. Regarding health care issues, the White House has taken to using fuzzy science and recently attempted to alter a report on the nation's health care services, reversing course only after scientists, including 20 Nobel Prize winners, charged the Bush administration with misusing science to bolster its policies on health care and other issues. In his three years in office, President Bush has done nothing to address the rising costs of health care and has no plan to do so. Meanwhile, nearly 75 million Americans were without health insurance at some point in 2001–2002.

Did Nothing to Address Health Care Crisis

Explosive health care costs are pummeling working families. Millions are forced to forgo necessary care because they cannot afford the cost. Between 2000 and 2003, the average cost of workers' premium contributions for family coverage rose nearly 50 percent. And American companies trying to do the right thing by their workers carry an enormous competitive burden. Since Bush took office, at least 4.9 million more people, including 126,000 more children, have become uninsured. The increase between 2001 and 2002 was the largest in 10 years. Nearly 75 million nonelderly Americans were uninsured for all or part of the two year period of 2001–2002. Yet President Bush put forward no plan and taken no effective steps to remedy this crisis. His prescription drug plan helped pharmaceutical companies more than patients (see page 10), and the Bush budget included a \$46 billion taxpayer giveaway to the HMOs. Yet according to Families USA, his budget would reduce net funding for Medicare by nearly \$1 billion in fiscal year 2005 and by almost \$16 billion between 2005 and 2014.

Proposed Taking Billions from Children's Health Insurance

Bush, as part of his economic stimulus package of October 2001, proposed to strip \$11 billion from the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) that allows lower-income families to afford health care for their children. Bush's proposal would move the money to a block-grant program designed to help laid-off workers maintain their health

insurance coverage. Any coverage unemployed workers receive from SCHIP funds would be at the expense of children in low-income families.

Altered Report on Racial and Ethnic Disparities

The Bush administration's Department of Health and Human Services altered a report to downplay findings about the differences in health care services the nation's minorities receive. According to a February 2004 report in *The New York Times*, the altered report dropped several statements noting health care disparities. After congressional leaders and health care professionals criticized the report, and the changes became public, the Bush administration said it would release the undoctored report.

Vowed to Veto Bipartisan Patients' Bill of Rights

The Bush administration consistently opposed a strong Patients' Bill of Rights. Bush is supporting insurers in a case currently before the U.S. Supreme Court that challenges the validity of a 1997 Texas law allowing patients to sue HMOs in state court for negligent claims decisions. Earlier, when Bush spoke to a convention of cardiologists in March 2001, he told them he objected to provisions that would allow patients to legally hold HMOs accountable for medical decisions in state and federal courts, such as those in the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001 introduced by Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.).

Read more about the Bush record on health care at

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