



Providing Affordable Coverage for All Americans: The Argument for Young Adults

The American health care system is fundamentally broken. Health care costs are skyrocketing, and nearly 46 million Americans lack health insurance — a disproportionate number of those without health coverage are between the ages of 18 and 28. The burden of rising health care costs is threatening our future and our economic security. Young adults should demand change because health insurance costs are:

- **Stifling Job Growth and Wages:** As young adults enter the workforce, job opportunities and incomes are decreasing due to rising health care costs. For example:
 - Over the past five years, health insurance premiums have grown by 73 percent, while wages have grown by 15 percent and inflation by 14 percent.
 - One in five employers expects to slow hiring in 2006 due to health costs.
- **Inhibiting Young Adults from Seeking Needed Care:** The lack of health insurance among young adults leads to dangerous delays in needed treatment. Additionally, rising health costs can add to the financial hardship of an already cash-strapped young adult. As a matter of fact:
 - In 2004, over half of uninsured young adults went without needed health care because of cost.
 - Nearly half of all Americans who file for bankruptcy do so because of medical expenses.
- **Deteriorating Our Global Competitiveness:** The U.S. was once the world leader in innovation and business climate. Today, we are falling behind, in part, due to health care costs:
 - Rising health costs diminish innovation and competitiveness by forcing American businesses to choose between investing in technology and paying for health care benefits.
 - Nearly half of small businesses no longer provide health insurance, creating a “race to the bottom” for workers’ benefits.
- **Resulting from Unfair Rules and Special-Interest Politics:** These problems are not predestined. Instead, they result from policy choices made by a White House and Congress that have failed to address America’s health care crisis, providing health insurance and drug companies with record profits but leaving American businesses with higher costs, fewer benefits and millions more uninsured.
- **Solvable — Through Leadership:** Young adults should be catalysts for change, become active in their community or campus and embrace real reform to the health care system:
 - All Americans should have affordable coverage that maintains choice of doctors and plans, controls costs and makes preventive care a national priority.
 - In a system where everybody benefits from health care coverage, everyone should help pay for it and share responsibility for health care costs.