

10 Questions for Political Candidates

The questions below represent the best thinking of more than three hundred executives from across the spectrum of healthcare, including the physician, hospital, pharmacy and pharmaceutical, insurance, employer, government, advocacy, public policy, allied professionals and consumer sectors. We ask that you, as a candidate for public office, consider these questions as a framework for public policy development and execution. While there are no simple answers to these complex ideas, they represent the core issues our nation, our state and our communities face in responsibly meeting the health and healthcare needs of our citizens.

The organizations and individuals endorsing these questions and their value to the healthcare debate are collectively calling on you to promote public discourse on these important issues.

- ◆ Our country currently has no shared vision for healthcare policy. Do you believe that such a policy/vision is an important predicate to addressing health system deficiencies, and, if so, how would you go about developing one?
- ◆ Do you believe health care is a right or a privilege? Should we have a social contract for healthcare the way we do for education?
- ◆ What policy changes would you support to motivate individuals to assume a greater sense of individual responsibility for health-related decisions? How do we get people to understand there are limited resources and trade-offs have to be made?
- ◆ The healthcare system often lacks clear accountability that would encourage adoption of standards of care and quality improvement. How would you go about aligning financial and personal incentives to optimize outcomes?
- ◆ What steps would you take to address the current fragmentation in healthcare to promote continuity and coordination of care and access to the continuum of quality care, including prevention, mental and oral health services, and long-term and end-of-life care?
- ◆ What role can political leaders play in facilitating a change in emphasis in healthcare from high-end acute care to health promotion and prevention of chronic disease and injury?
- ◆ Currently our country has many citizens who lack access to healthcare services either because they cannot afford insurance, are underinsured or face social or cultural barriers. What steps would you take to correct this imbalance?
- ◆ What steps would you take to address the medical liability problem and create a legal environment that fosters openness, disclosure and high quality patient care?

- ◆ What steps would you take to relieve providers of unnecessary administrative and regulatory burdens in order to maximize the percent of healthcare dollars that support direct provision of patient care?
- ◆ What role should government play in advancing science-based medicine and technology and in fostering a robust healthcare information infrastructure?

Principles for Health Policy

As the "10 Questions for Political Candidates" were being vetted in various venues, we began work on a draft *statement of principles* for health policy. As a launch point, we used information distilled from our Phase I "community vision" meetings. These principles have also been endorsed by dozens of leaders, as listed in Appendix B.

A Statement of Principles for Health Policy

As a prerequisite to developing effective health policy, citizens must be engaged in the creation of a shared vision for American healthcare. Healthy people are vital to the health and well-being of the United States and its economy. Appropriate healthcare is necessary for the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

This Statement of Principles is intended to provide a "benchmark" against which health policy proposals should be evaluated. Given the sensitivity that surrounds language and the use of terms certain points need to be clarified with regard to the statement.

While the definition of "basic" goes beyond the scope of this document, it must encompass some elements often "siloeed" e.g., mental health, oral health and long-term care. The notion of "choice" does not imply that it is without increased cost to the individual. The term "universal coverage" does not refer to benefits, rather it refers to financing of care through health insurance and other mechanisms.

- Every American should have the ability to access basic high quality, safe, affordable, culturally appropriate health care services. Every American should have choice with regard to the provider of these services, and sound, understandable health information to facilitate good choices.
- Every American should have some financial responsibility for the cost of his/her health care, consistent with ability to pay, but should have access to financing mechanisms that protect against financial catastrophe and promote optimal health for each individual.
- Universal coverage of basic healthcare services and the elimination of health disparities should be a major goal of national health policy. The strengths of the current public-private system should be used in advancing toward this goal.

- Every provider should be responsible for practicing according to current standards of care and, in return, should receive fair reimbursement.
- Every American should be responsible for taking all reasonable steps to preserve his/her health.
- To promote patient-provider partnerships that maintain and improve individual health, education about health and the appropriate use of healthcare services should be integral components of the U.S. public educational curricula and our nation's healthcare system.