

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**ANA's Positions and Advocacy on Healthcare Reform**  
**August 7, 2009**

**Q. How does ANA decide on its policy for healthcare reform?**

A. ANA's House of Delegates, our representative deliberative body democratically elected by our Constituent (state) Member Associations, voted to adopt a stance in support of guaranteed, affordable, high-quality health care for all. This has been established policy of the Association for many years, most recently reaffirmed resoundingly by the ANA House of Delegates in 2005.

**Q. What is ANA's core belief on health care?**

A. ANA believes that health care is a basic human right, and supports the World Health Organization's challenge – originally articulated in 1978, and reaffirmed as late as 2007 – for all nations to provide a basic level of health care to their citizens. The current US system fails in this regard at multiple levels. In fact, it is the only industrialized Western country that does not provide this guarantee to its citizens. It also fails to make the best use of its skilled nursing professionals to provide care throughout all settings and in the varied capacities in which nurses can contribute to significantly patient welfare.

**Q. What changes does ANA believe must be made in the healthcare system, and how would nurses contribute?**

A. We believe that a system focused on primary care, prevention and chronic disease management can alleviate much of the expensive acute care that currently takes its toll in human suffering, as well as dollars. It is a worthwhile national investment. And nursing's strengths as a profession -- in providing holistic care that contemplates the individual, his or her family and community -- is exactly the emphasis sought in a reformed health care system.

**Q. Why does ANA support President Obama's health reform proposals and health reform legislation in Congress?**

A. ANA's support of the President's approach to health reform, as well as our support of the House so-called tri-committee legislation and the Senate health committee's bill is based on ANA's principles on healthcare reform. If their proposals did not match ANA's goals for both nurses and patients, we would not be supporting them, regardless of political party.

**Q. Has ANA read the bills in Congress, and do you understand the implications?**

A. We have carefully read and analyzed the legislation that has been proposed and will continue to closely monitor these bills as the health care debate continues to evolve.

**Q. What is ANA’s position on establishing a public health insurance plan option?**

A. ANA believes strongly that the inclusion of a public plan option will help make health care more affordable for patients, generate needed competition in the insurance market, and guarantee the availability of quality, affordable coverage for individuals and families no matter what happens. The public plan option could bring positive competition to bear on the private insurance market, encouraging patient-centered, value-driven health care delivery, creating a win-win for those whom the healthcare system is supposed to serve, the people of the United States.

**Q. What does ANA support in the health reform bills in Congress in addition to provision of a public plan option?**

A. Just as important, these bills also recognize that coverage is nothing without access and quality. The bills’ emphasis on wellness and prevention, investment in nursing workforce development, recognition of the importance of Advanced Practice Nurses to primary care, and demonstrated commitment to fostering full integration, coordination, and collaboration at all levels among our nation’s health care workforce will improve our health care system.

**Q. America has great medical care. Why do we need health reform at all?**

A. Despite incremental efforts at reform, the number of uninsured continues to grow, the cost of care continues to rise, and the safety and quality of care are questioned. Harvard researchers have found that 62% of all personal bankruptcies in the U.S. in 2007 were caused by health problems—and 78% of those filers had insurance. The overwhelming problems of the health care system require significant attention on the part of health professionals, policy-makers, and the public.

The United State currently spends 2.4 trillion dollars every year on health care. If health care reform were to cost one trillion over the next ten years, this would represent only a 4 percent spending increase in cost. With this investment we can effect massive changes to the health care system—changes which will ultimately lead to significant health care savings, improved quality of care and coverage for millions who currently go without. We believe this is an investment worth making.

**Q. Why does ANA have to become so involved in such a political issue like healthcare reform?**

A. From its inception in 1896 to the present day, ANA has recognized that individuals can shape health care policy consistent with the goals of registered nurses and in the best interest of their patients. The participation of registered nurses in grassroots activities is one of the most important components of our government affairs program and has been responsible for many of our successes. ANA has a long, rich history of influencing public policy to benefit both registered nurses and their patients.

**Q. ANA members have different political views. How can ANA advocate for certain legislation and still remain nonpartisan and work on behalf of all its members?**

ANA's legislative agenda prioritizes ways to address the nursing shortage, appropriate staffing, workplace rights, workplace health and safety, and patient safety/advocacy. In keeping with a strong tradition of hard work, the ANA will continue to advocate for the profession of nursing. However, we cannot achieve these goals unless ANA as a national organization stays involved. Political advocacy, whether in Washington, D.C., or at the state level, is not about political parties or personal agendas, it is about supporting the policymakers of any party who share ANA's commitment to the nursing profession and to improving healthcare in our country. These relationships are vital to our ability to engender understanding and gather support for the issues of concern to nurses today. Throughout our history, ANA has worked to meet the ever-changing needs of nurses, patients, the health care community, and society. Through political involvement and advocacy, ANA will continue its fight for the needs of today's nursing profession as well as the health system needs of our country.

**Q. I don't agree with your policies on health reform. Is my opinion being heard?**

A. Thank you again for sharing your concerns. We recognize that there is a diversity of opinion on this and many other issues within nursing and our membership, and know that this diversity is part our strength. We deeply value your continued membership in and support of the ANA, and we will continue to work to set and maintain professional standards of practice and work toward a goal we all share—strengthening the future of nursing and ensuring quality health care for all.

*For more details on ANA's healthcare reform positions, please see the health system reform section of the ANA Web site: <http://www.nursingworld.org/healthcarereform>*

