



AT&T, Baker Center, Center for American Progress, CED, CWA, Intel, Kelly Services, SEIU And Wal-Mart Launch “Better Health Care Together” Campaign

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*Announce Common Sense Principles to Reform
American Health Care System by 2012*

The press conference is archived at:

<http://www.visualwebcaster.com/event.asp?id=37848>

Washington, February 7, 2007 – An unusual partnership of organizations today launched the “Better Health Care Together” campaign. The announcement included a set of four common sense principles for “achieving a new American health care system by 2012.” Founding members include AT&T, the Howard H. Baker, Jr. Center for Public Policy, the Center for American Progress, the Committee for Economic Development, the Communications Workers of America, Intel, Kelly Services, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Wal-Mart. The campaign founders pledged to convene a national summit by the end of May and recruit additional business, labor, government and nonprofit leaders to sign on to the principles and form a wide-ranging coalition.

The principles document that each founding member signed begins:

America’s health care system is broken. The traditional employer-based model of coverage in its current form is endangered without substantial reform to our health care system. It is being crushed by out of control costs, the pressures of the global economy, and the large and growing number of uninsured. Soaring health costs threaten workers’ livelihoods and companies’ competitiveness, and undermine the security that individuals of a prosperous nation should enjoy. We can only solve these problems – and deliver health care that is high quality, affordable, accessible and secure – if business, government, labor, the health care delivery system and the nonprofit sector work together.

Specifically, the four principles are:

1. We believe every person in America must have quality, affordable health insurance coverage;
2. We believe individuals have a responsibility to maintain and protect their health;
3. We believe that America must dramatically improve the value it receives for every health care dollar; and,
4. We believe that businesses, governments, and individuals all should contribute to managing and financing a new American health care system.

“Wal-Mart is committed to high quality, affordable and accessible health care. But our current system hurts America’s competitiveness and leaves too many people uninsured,” said Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. President and CEO Lee Scott. “Government alone won’t and can’t solve this crisis. We have to work together –

business, labor, government and our communities. We also need to empower people to take more responsibility and more control over their own health care. By following this campaign's common sense principles, we believe America can have high quality, affordable and accessible health care by 2012. We can slow the growth of health care costs in this country and guarantee the uninsured access to good health coverage."

"What unites us here today is our belief that it will be a far greater America when we finally get health care for every man, woman and child," said Andy Stern, President of SEIU. "We can't keep tinkering, hoping that incremental change will fix our broken health care system. We need fundamental change, and it is going to take new thinking, leadership, new partnerships, some risk taking, and compromising to make it happen. But that is what we all owe our country."

"There has to be a way for Americans to access group coverage outside the traditional employment relationship," said Kelly Services President and CEO Carl Camden. "Our WWII vintage health care insurance system is woefully out of step with the global economy and the needs of more than 22 million American free agent workers who prefer a more flexible approach to work. Current workforce trends will only re-enforce the movement away from traditional employer-employee relationships. Workforce mobility and flexibility have been historic strengths of the American economy. Unless we act, and act soon, on health care reform, that competitive advantage will be at serious risk."

"The U.S. healthcare system delivers results below international norms at high cost, and consumers and industry suffer the consequences," said Craig Barrett, Intel Chairman. "The simple principles and the diverse champions announced today will create a framework to develop workable approaches to the problems. In particular the ideas on consumer empowerment to drive system efficiency are completely in line with the Dossia personal health record effort that many of today's participants have helped kickoff."

CWA President Larry Cohen said, "Our current system puts a huge strain on employers that provide quality benefits for employees – both current and retired – and their families. It forces many U.S. businesses to compete not on the quality of their products, services and performance, but instead on the cost of health care benefits. It is long past time to move health care – a public good – from the corporate balance sheet to the public balance sheet."

The campaign's founding members said they will work to engage leaders at all levels – from local communities to Washington, D.C. – to bring about real and meaningful change to America's health care system. The founders said the campaign will:

- Recruit selected business, labor and civic leaders committed to making health care reform a reality;
- Convene a national summit of the membership by the end of May;
- Enlist support for the principles from national, state and local elected officials, policymakers, candidates and opinion leaders; and,
- Launch education initiatives to persuade workers and customers that the current health care system should be reformed to reflect the "Better Health Care Together" principles.

Center for American Progress President John Podesta said, "Every person in America should have quality, [affordable health care](#) coverage. This coalition of business, union, and policy leaders can help break through the forces of the status quo and ensure that result by 2012."

Committee for Economic Development President Charles Kolb added: “CED is honored to join this campaign. As a business-led public policy organization, we have long been concerned about the viability of our rapidly eroding employer-sponsored health insurance system. CED’s business Trustees are currently working on a set of market-oriented, incentive-based reforms that we hope will play a constructive role in achieving today’s common sense principles for reform.”

“As they listen to Americans struggling to afford health care, and companies reeling at its costs, officials in both parties sense that the time to fix our health care system is now upon us,” said former Senator Howard Baker. “I believe these principles can form the foundation for genuine bipartisan progress in the next few years.”

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