

**Health Insurance Coverage Under the Bush Administration:
More Uninsured, Higher Premiums, Eroding Coverage**

THE FACTS: More people lack health insurance coverage today than when President Bush and Republicans took charge. Even those with coverage are paying more and getting less.

- **Since 2001, the number of uninsured increased by 5.9 million people, to 46 million uninsured in 2007.** The percent of uninsured adults has grown from 15 percent to 16.7 percent. Forty-two States have an uninsured rate of 10 percent or more, 10 States more than had such a rate in 2001. Nineteen States have an uninsured rate higher than 15 percent, compared to 12 States in 2001.¹
- **Employer-offered coverage has eroded.** The percentage of people with health insurance through their employer has dropped during the Bush Presidency from 66 percent to 62.3 percent.
- **Working families are increasingly uninsured and vulnerable.** More working families lack health insurance; 39.8 million uninsured people are in working families, 4.7 million more than in 2001.²
- **Out-of-pocket cost increases have outpaced wages.** Health insurance premiums have increased by 97 percent between 2001 and 2007, compared to a 24 percent increase in wages over the same period.³
- **Half of those who declare bankruptcy in the U.S. do so because of medical bills—which affects about 2 million people annually.** Most of those who go bankrupt because of medical problems have health insurance, but the insurance is not sufficient to cover their medical costs.⁴
- **Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP have helped keep millions insured.** Coverage under these programs rose to 22.5 percent of the population from 20 percent in 2001, as insurance in the private sector has been harder to access.⁵

THE BUSH HEALTH RECORD: Instead of offering real solutions that would help reduce the number of uninsured children and families, President Bush and the Republican Congress have ignored the plight of the uninsured and frequently offered proposals that would make things worse.

- **The first Bush budget virtually ignored the plight of the uninsured.** In 2001, there were nearly 40 million uninsured people, including 8.9 million children.⁶ It is well established that people who are uninsured are sicker, less likely to receive health care, and more likely to die from illnesses than those with insurance. Yet the first Bush budget ignored the plight of the uninsured and contained only a single, minor proposal which was confined to the individual health insurance market, where less than 5 percent of the U.S. population currently purchase their coverage.
- **The President's health care policies have always favored the healthy and wealthy.** President Bush's proposals to address health insurance coverage, if enacted, would have threatened coverage for more than 170 million Americans who receive health insurance through the employer-sponsored system. His proposals also would have disproportionately helped higher income, healthy individuals and would have jeopardized coverage for those most in need – those with modest incomes and chronic illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease.⁷
- **Under the six years of Republican control in the House during the Bush Presidency, there were no meaningful attempts to pass legislation to cover the uninsured or to decrease costs for those with coverage.** Both the Bush Administration and Republicans in Congress have failed to make covering the uninsured or cost control a priority. Even the new Medicare prescription drug coverage benefits pharmaceutical companies and insurers at the expense of seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- **President Bush and Congressional Republicans created Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) to benefit wealthy Americans.** Numerous independent studies including one from the Government Accountability Office have shown that HSAs disproportionately benefit the healthy and the wealthy at the expense of people who remain in traditional coverage. Cloaked in rhetoric of choice and

ownership, HSAs most benefit large investment banks and wealthy individuals searching for tax shelters and do nothing to reduce the number of uninsured.⁸

- **The Bush Administration and Republicans have jeopardized the stability of the very programs that ensure that senior citizens, people with disabilities and low-income families and children have affordable coverage that meets their needs.** Public programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP have kept the number of uninsured Americans from increasing even more rapidly. Yet the Bush Administration has consistently worked to undermine these programs, roll back coverage and eligibility, and raise costs for those enrolled. Examples of such efforts include: additional premiums for Medicare beneficiaries, increased cost sharing for the poorest needing healthcare, cutting working families ability to access healthcare for their children, capping funds to provide long-term care services to the low-income elderly, and twice vetoing bipartisan bills to reauthorize S-CHIP.

¹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of Census Bureau data, 2008.

² Id.

³ Claxton, Gary, et al., Employer Health Benefits, 2007 Annual Survey (Washington: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and HRET, 2007).

⁴ Himmelstein, David; Elizabeth Warren, Deborah Thorne, and Steffie Woolhandler. "MarketWatch: Illness And Injury As Contributors To Bankruptcy", Health Affairs Web Exclusive, February 2, 2005.

⁵ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of Census Bureau data, 2008.

⁶ Id.

⁷ Jacobs and Claxton, "Comparing The Assets Of Uninsured Households To Cost Sharing Under High-Deductible Health Plans" *Health Affairs*, 27, no. 3 (2008): w214-w221, Government Accountability Office, "Consumer-Directed Health Plans: Early Enrollee Experiences with Health Savings Accounts and Eligible Health Plans," August 2006.

⁸ Id.