



2010 Teacher's Guide: Health

Written for the National Student/Parent Mock Election

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Teacher's Guide to Health Care Issues in the 2010 Elections

Note: This is not a teacher's guide to health care and insurance options; those are already available. Some examples are given in the "further information" section below.

Section 1) Introduction:

Last March, Congress passed a controversial health care bill supported by Democrats and opposed by Republicans. This year, the Republicans are trying to make "Obamacare" an election issue; the Democrats say it is old news and the Republicans have no good alternative.

There is still confusion and disagreement about whether our health care will become better or worse, cost more or less, etc. There are no "right" answers to many of these questions and issues, especially since most of the new law has not yet taken effect.

The law is over 2400 pages long, so this guide does not attempt to provide information about specific provisions. For more information, see the U.S. Government web site about the new law: <http://www.healthcare.gov/>

The following are some subjects to examine, and suggested activities, about how the new federal health care law may influence the 2010 elections.



Section 2) Topics for discussion and activities:

Role-playing scenarios:

You are a candidate for Congress, hoping for a second term.* There was no time to read the entire final bill before you voted. Many of your constituents have deep concerns, including a physical therapist whose practice is mostly senior citizens.

Some patients are in danger of suffering broken hips and potential death from falls without the therapy that maintains their muscle strength. But the new legislation may mean further cuts of as much as 20% in Medicare payments, and the therapist will be forced to close his practice, so he has sought your help.

A young single mother with multiple sclerosis has been unable to take the expensive medications that could save her from further brain lesions. The young mother has also sought your help.

Assemble a team of staff members and volunteers to research the final health care bill in preparation for a town meeting you plan to call before the election. Instruct your research team to use the library and the assistance of

librarians as well as the internet. Provide them with the list below of basic questions for which you will want clear, concise answers, but ask them to use their own initiative in bringing other important questions to your attention as well.

How well prepared will you be for a barrage of questions from your constituents? Hold a dry run with your staff and volunteers. Will your desire to win reelection influence your answers? Your view of the health care bill?

Basic questions:

1. Are all children covered by the new health care law?
2. Will senior citizens receive the same care they were able to get under Medicare?
3. Will specialists be covered?
4. Will people with chronic illnesses be covered?
5. Will prescriptions be covered?
6. Can you still see your own doctor?
7. Will mental illness be covered?
8. Will special tests be covered?
9. Will eye glasses be covered?
10. How long will you need to wait to get a doctor's appointment?

*Note to the teacher: This role-play can be repeated for different sets of questions with several candidates for Congress, staff members, and volunteers each time. The teacher will wish to adapt the difficulty of the assignment to the needs of the class. For example, interviews with family and friends using government health services or private insurance can be used as a research strategy.

What provisions in the new health care law will affect you personally?

Is the new law a "government takeover" of health care? Should it be repealed? How much money from taxes will be required? Who is taxed and who benefits? Under our existing system, who pays for emergency health care for the uninsured? Will preventative care decrease those costs? What other factors enter into the economics of providing health care?

Is the US government capable of running an efficient health care system, or does it just create more bureaucracy? Is Medicare a good or bad example? Do insurance companies promote health care efficiency, or do they just add to the complexity of health care delivery? Who decides what treatment is covered, and how?

Will health care be a sub-issue of the economy in this election? How are the two tied together? Who pays for health care now, and how? Will the changes be good or bad for the economy?

Should the government mandate health insurance or any other kind of insurance, such as auto insurance? Is health care part of the Constitutional mandate for the government to "provide for the general welfare," or should it be a personal choice about whether to have health care insurance?

Which positions do you agree with, and what evidence do you have to support them:

- a) That health care is, or is not, a government responsibility
- b) That the new law will raise or lower health care costs and/or taxes
- c) That the new law will create more intrusion between patients and doctors, or that it will limit insurance companies from intruding and denying care
- d) That insurance companies do or do not follow anti-consumer practices in their coverage decisions

What are the facts vs. the rhetoric in the health care debate?

Almost everyone agrees that the present health care system in the US is dysfunctional. If not the government, who should regulate health care, and how?



Section 3) What changes in the law might be made?

Both major parties agree that the new law will have to be changed, but disagree on how and why. What are their arguments, and which do you support?

a) Many countries, including all the G20 countries except the U.S., have had universal health care for decades. What have been their experiences, and why has the U.S. been so reluctant to join them? See:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_health_care
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_care_system

- b) Should the US consider a "single payer system" like that in Canada or the U.K.?
- c) How do other countries like France and Switzerland mix government requirements and private health insurance?
- d) Should universal health care include dental coverage?
- e) What other types of insurance could or should the government mandate?

Have students investigate the health care they would receive in various situations and countries. They can role-play the part of patients, government officials, insurance companies, doctors, etc. Create a scenario or research topic from the following list, with one factor randomly chosen from each column (add your own and/or use states instead of countries):

<u>Patient</u>	<u>Medical Situation</u>	<u>Citizenship</u>	<u>Location</u>
Student	Auto accident	Argentina	U.S.A.
Teacher	Eye injury	Australia	Thailand
Salesman	Skin Infection	Brazil	South Africa
Housewife	Burned hands	Canada	Singapore
Legislator	Brain tumor	Cuba	Norway
Plumber	Back injury	France	Mexico
Sports Pro	Sprained wrist	India	Japan
Banker	Cancer	Nigeria	Costa Rica
Beggar	Dog bite	Pakistan	Bhutan
Truck Driver	AIDS	Vietnam	Afghanistan

Return to the congressional role-play. Based on what you have learned about health care in other countries, is

there an amendment or an additional bill you would like to submit to expand the current health care law?

Section 4) Sources of further information

GENERAL INFORMATION

Democratic Party positions on Health Care:

http://www.ontheissues.org/celeb/Democratic_Party_Health_Care.htm

Republican Party positions on Health Care:

http://www.ontheissues.org/celeb/republican_party_health_care.htm

<http://www.gop.gov/solutions/healthcare>

C-SPAN Health Care Hub

<http://www.c-span.org/Topics/Health-Care-Insurance-Reform-Legislation-Town-Hall.aspx>

Health Care Policy: U.S. State Government Guide

http://www.deloitte.com/view/en_US/us/industries/us-state-government/2010-elections/state_health_care_reform/133b2e46f42a4210VgnVCM200000bb42f00aRCRD.htm

Physicians for a National Health Program

<http://www.pnhp.org>

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

<http://www.kff.org/>



NEWS REPORTS

Election 2010: Sizing up the health care overhaul:

<http://www.thetowntalk.com/article/20100818/NEWS01/100818025/Election-2010-Sizing-up-the-health-care-overhaul>

The Republican Health Care Failure (from The Next Right)

<http://www.thenextright.com/patrick-ruffini/the-republican-health-care-failure>

Poll shows health-care reform may be catching on

<http://blogs.marketwatch.com/election/2010/06/30/poll-shows-health-care-reform-may-be-catching-on/>

The French Lesson In Health Care http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/07_28/b4042070.htm

Top 10 Obama's Health Care Reform Myths

<http://healpth.com/article/show/id/60.html>

Democrats Plan Campaign Backing Obama Health Plan

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-06-04/democrats-plan-campaign-backing-obama-health-plan-update1-.html>

Republican Party tries for health reform repeal

<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0810/40922.html>



LESSON PLANS

A Very Controversial Health Insurance Law

<http://www.teachablemoment.org/high/insurancebill.html>

Obama's Health Insurance Plan & Its Critics

<http://www.teachablemoment.org/high/obamahealth.html>

Checking Language & Facts in the Healthcare Debate

<http://www.teachablemoment.org/high/healthcarereform.html>

The Healthcare Debate

<http://www.teachablemoment.org/high/insurance.html>

Health Care Debate Lesson Overview

<http://millercenter.org/public/debates/healthcare/health-care-lesson-plan>

Lesson Plan: Health Insurance (PDF file)

<http://insurance.mo.gov/consumer/teens/healthLesson.pdf>

4007 Health Care Lesson Plans (Annual license fee applies)

<http://www.lessonplanet.com/search?grade=All&keywords=health+care>

NS/PME Guide to the 2008 Presidential Election Issue: Health Care (PDF file)

http://www.nationalmockelection.org/docs/2008_issues_forum/NSPME_2008_Health_Care_Guide.pdf