

Having a Health Care Reform Debate that Promotes Practical Solutions:

How to Respond to Verification Requirements and Immigration Attacks

American voters overwhelmingly support health care reform. They want Congress to come up with practical solutions this year and do not want Congress to allow the debate over health care reform to be hijacked by extraneous issues. There is strong support for providing affordable health care to legal immigrants who are viewed as deserving the same benefits as citizens. Americans also want to see immigrants share in the responsibility of participating in the health care system, like everyone else, and pay their fair share for affordable health care. Nonetheless, some members will attempt to undermine the progress on health care reform by introducing baseless attacks that relate to immigrants or immigration.

In shifting the focus to immigration, opponents of health care reform will use misleading arguments to distract us from the most critical issue: affordable, quality health care. The most effective response to these attacks is to move the conversation back to the fundamental concerns about access to quality, affordable health care, a functional health care system, or practical considerations involved in running an efficient health care system, rather than direct responses about which immigrants are deserving or not deserving of health care or a complicated immigration discussion.

Below are examples of the types of attacks expected and suggestions for responses that will help pivot away from a heated immigration debate back to health care:

- Additional verification/documentation requirements
- “Citizens first” thresholds
- Restrictions on immigrant eligibility
- Additional requirements for sponsored immigrants
- Restrictions/penalties affecting immigrants’ ability to obtain legal status
- Waiting periods

Strategy Recommendations:

- Pivot from the immigration debate back to the harm that the proposed solutions will cause by creating new and costly barriers that will prevent millions of Americans from gaining better access to quality, affordable health care.
- Don’t get mired in the details of the immigration amendment – keep the focus on why the amendment does not improve health care or access to health care for American workers and families. Clearly point out the obstructionist nature of the attack and where relevant, the impracticality of the proposed solution.
- Don’t get bogged down with the debate over illegal immigrants. Immigration issues will be dealt with in immigration reform. Instead, focus on ***“We’re here now to help get people connected with quality, affordable health care and ask them to pay their fair share.”***
- When referring to immigrants, re-define the picture of immigrants so that it’s not solely a negative one of illegal immigrants. Move away from stereotypes of illegal immigrants to immigrant workers and families who are here because they want to become citizens and work toward the American dream. They own homes, have their own businesses, and participate in civic activities. These immigrants are our friends,

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co-workers, family members, part of our children's schools, our children's friends, and our community. Immigrants work, pay taxes, and want to pay their fair share to have access to affordable health care just like everyone else.

Talking Points:

- The health care reform bills prohibit undocumented immigrants from receiving federally subsidized health care. Federal health programs already have concrete mechanisms for verifying immigrant eligibility; the health care reform bills keep these procedures in place. However, imposing new verification systems will prevent eligible citizens and immigrants from getting the health care they need when they need it. Each layer of bureaucratic red tape increases the administrative costs of providing health care. We need to make sure that reform efforts and health care dollars help families connect with their doctor rather than forcing them to jump through additional unnecessary hoops.
- This conversation is about making sure that quality, affordable health care is available American families and workers. This is not a debate over immigration and we will not allow our efforts to reform the health system to be derailed.
- Health care reform should eliminate barriers to quality, affordable health coverage, not create them. What these amendments will do is pile on paperwork, make people wait more time before they can go to the doctor, and end up make health care even more expensive.
- Opponents want to prevent legal immigrants and citizens from contributing to our health care system. We need more people paying to fix health care in the U.S., not fewer. If we stop people from paying into the system, it will cost all of us more down the road.
- An American solution should allow all workers and families, including immigrants, to share in the responsibility of health care reform, pay their fair share, and purchase affordable health coverage.
- Costly verification or documentation requirements will divide our families and keep eligible Americans from receiving care. We need to remove not add obstacles that will stand in the way of quality, affordable health care for everyone.
- Our health care dollars should be spent on affordable health care, not wasteful bureaucracies or burdensome paperwork requirements. It is irresponsible to continue denying health coverage to Americans by creating new hoops to jump through to get health care.
 - For instance, we already have wasted millions of dollars of taxpayer money on documentation rules that prevented thousands of eligible citizen children from getting Medicaid. These barriers compromised the health of citizens by delaying and denying access to health care.
- Any waiting period means years without preventive care and a family doctor, increasing the risk that we may miss the opportunity to diagnose and treat conditions

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such as asthma, diabetes, hypertension or cancer. Would you accept waiting years to get the health care you or your family may need?

- Americans need access to affordable health care now. Many American families are one illness or accident away from bankruptcy. Let's stop creating ways to keep people from getting the affordable health care they so desperately need and give them the health care they need right now.