



Divided We Fail
Statement for the Record
Senate Finance Committee Roundtable on
EXPANDING COVERAGE IN HEALTH CARE REFORM
May 5, 2009

Chairman Baucus, Ranking Member Grassley, distinguished Committee members, on behalf of the more than 50 million people represented by Divided We Fail, we thank you for this timely discussion on expanding health care coverage.

Divided We Fail is a national movement to engage the American people, businesses, non-profit organizations and elected officials in finding bipartisan solutions to bring health and financial security to every American. Divided We fail is lead by AARP with the Business Roundtable, National Federation of Independent Business, and Service Employees International Union, and joined by more than 100 supporting organizations from across the political spectrum.

We believe that all Americans should have access to affordable, quality health care, including prescription drugs, and that these costs should not unfairly burden future generations. We believe wellness and prevention efforts, including changes in personal behavior such as diet and exercise, should be top national priorities. And we believe Americans should have choices when it comes to long-term care - allowing them to maintain their independence at home or in their communities with expanded and affordable financing options.

Since its formation in 2007, Divided We Fail has mobilized 1.6 million Americans and organized nearly 1,000 local events including 500 “Community Conversations” to inform Americans about the options to address health care and financial security and gather new ideas from the public.

We continue to work diligently together to ensure that we enact comprehensive, bipartisan health care reform legislation this year. Given the current economic challenges, it has never been more important to invest in a better, stronger, more efficient health system.

We must make health care coverage more affordable and accessible for individuals, businesses and society to sustain improvements in health and our financial security for future generations. Doing so will save lives and money, improve the safety and delivery of care, and help fuel our economic recovery. Health care is inextricably tied to America’s economic well-being.

There is broad agreement among the four lead organizations in Divided We Fail on many aspects of health reform, including the need to expand coverage by:

- Enacting insurance market reforms to improve and provide access to individuals and employers seeking affordable, high-quality health care options by creating marketplaces to enable firms and individuals to purchase insurance efficiently;
- Providing sliding scale subsidies to make coverage affordable;
- Building on private coverage through policies that promote greater “take up” and enrollment of workers in job-based coverage;
- Enacting outreach and enrollment policies to ensure individuals who are eligible for public coverage are enrolled in public coverage, and establishing eligibility for public coverage for all individuals living at or below the poverty level;
- Refocusing payment incentives to reward quality rather than quantity of care, through expanded efforts to implement pay-for-performance systems that can help keep coverage more affordable;

- Promoting provider collaboration and accountability by rewarding, rather than penalizing, collaboration across care settings to provide patient-centered care to improve both quality and efficiency and keep coverage affordable;
- Strengthening primary care and chronic care management which are proven ways to promote quality, cost-effective care by providing more accurate payment and expanded testing of the “medical home” model that holds great promise for improving quality, coordination and efficiency;
- Promoting health information technology, decision support tools, and unbiased research on the effectiveness of all aspects of our health care system to give doctors the best information available to make health care decisions with their patients, and
- Strengthening the health care workforce with more primary care providers.

Given the broad range and disparate constituencies in Divided We Fail, we of course do not have unanimous agreement on all aspects of something as complex as comprehensive health reform. However, we and other stakeholders share a broad and growing consensus that we cannot allow these differences to stop us from finding common ground and enacting comprehensive, bipartisan health care reform this year.

AARP and our Divided We Fail allies will continue to work diligently together to find workable solutions to bridge these differences because we all understand that the status quo is unsustainable and we cannot afford to fail.

We again commend this Committee for its leadership and look forward to working with the Committee and members on both sides of the aisle to make enactment of meaningful, comprehensive health reform a reality this year.