Affordable, quality health care and long-term financial security are two issues that Americans care deeply about in the 2008 Presidential election.

To help you learn what the candidates have to say about these critical issues, Divided We Fail has produced this booklet that contains the candidates’ own words on these topics.

Divided We Fail used the candidates’ own words in press reports and legislative materials to develop this booklet. We encourage you to go to the candidates’ websites to read more about the candidate’s position on each issue. Prior to publication, each candidate was asked to review our publication to ensure the accuracy of the quotations.

- Share this booklet with family and friends.
- Share your ideas on these issues with the candidates.
- Ask the candidates to expand on their ideas on these important issues.
- Share your stories and ideas about these issues with Divided We Fail (www.dividedwefail.org).

Divided We Fail encourages you to use this booklet in making a decision about the candidate that best represents your views.

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What is Divided We Fail?

AARP launched Divided We Fail to raise the voices of millions of Americans who believe that health and long-term financial security are the most pressing issues facing our nation here at home. Divided We Fail is a broad and diverse initiative that includes consumers, labor and business.

As part of Divided We Fail’s efforts, AARP created this document “In Their Own Words” in conjunction with Business Roundtable (an association of CEOs from the largest companies in the country) and the National Federation of Independent Business (the nation’s leading small business association).

The numbers for health care and financial security are compelling:

- Twenty-three percent of Americans have problems paying medical bills and millions go bankrupt every year because of these bills.
- Twenty-nine percent say they have skipped treatment, tests or prescriptions because of costs.
- Forty-six million Americans are uninsured.
- Just one-fifth of workers today have a traditional pension plan.
- Social Security needs to be strengthened for future generations.
- Half of private sector workers are not signed up for a 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan.
- Only half of families have saved money in any kind of retirement account, and among those who have, the typical family has saved less than $35,000.
The time for action is now.
Americans have the right to know where our candidates stand. Health and financial security aren’t Republican or Democratic issues—they are American issues.
We have the right to demand that our candidates address these critical issues facing our families, and, when elected, keep their campaign promises.
Divided We Fail searched press reports and legislative materials to learn what they planned to do about affordable, quality health care and lifetime financial security for all Americans. Here is what we found by July 10, 2008. Prior to publication, each candidate was asked to review the quote included for him for accuracy. You can read more by going to the candidates’ websites or calling their campaigns.
Access to Affordable, Quality Health Care

Affordable Health Care
We believe all Americans should have access to affordable health care, including prescription drugs, and these costs should not burden future generations.

Wellness & Prevention
We believe wellness and prevention efforts, including changes in personal behavior such as diet and exercise, should be top national priorities.

Long-Term Care
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.

Senator John McCain (R)

“The biggest problem with the American health care system is that it costs too much… I believe that everyone should get a tax credit of $2500, $5000 for families, if they have health insurance. It is good tax policy to take away the bias toward giving workers benefits instead of wages. It is good health policy to reward having insurance no matter where your policy comes from. Drugs are an important part of medicine…if there are ways to bring greater competition to our drug markets by safe re-importation of drugs, by faster introduction of generic drugs, or by any other means we should do so.”


“I believe workers should have the option to purchase a cheaper policy between jobs and a higher cost one when they can afford it. We should consider allowing people to purchase insurance across state lines, have the freedom to purchase coverage that reflects their medical priorities, and be permitted to save more money in tax-exempt Health Savings Accounts… The answer is to enhance the ability of the free market to offer affordable insurance options for as many Americans as possible and to help those without insurance to access the healthcare system…”


“[W]e need incentives for home health care as opposed to long-term care. In my state of Arizona, we adopted a proposal which incentivizes health care providers to keep people in home health care settings. Dramatically less expensive than long-term care.”


“I am confident in the pioneering approaches for delivering care to people in a home setting, and would look to them first as models for how we need to approach this issue. There have been a variety of promising state-based experiments such as Cash and Counseling or The Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE). Through these programs, seniors are given a monthly assistance which they can use to hire workers and purchase care-related services and goods. They can get help managing their care by designating representatives, such as relatives or friends, to help make decisions. It also offers counseling and bookkeeping services to assist consumers.”

Long-Term Financial Security

Social Security
We believe our children and grandchildren should have an adequate quality of life when they retire. Social Security must be strengthened without burdening future generations.

Saving & Working
We believe workers should be provided with financial incentives to save, should have access to effective retirement plans, and should be able to keep working and contributing to society regardless of age.

Financial Literacy
We believe Americans of all ages should have access to tools to help manage their finances, and save for the future and better, easy to understand information to help them increase their financial literacy and manage their money wisely.

“I want young workers to be able to, if they choose, to take part of their own money which is their taxes and put it in an account which has their name on it. Now, that’s a voluntary thing, it’s for younger people, it would not affect any present-day retirees or the system as necessary.”
(CNN, American Morning, 07/08/08, http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0807/08/ltm.03.html)

“I believe that we may meet our obligations to the retirees of today and the future without raising taxes, and I support supplementing the current Social Security system with personal accounts—but not as a substitute for addressing benefit promises that cannot be kept. People in both parties agree that we must make the hard decisions to restore solvency to these programs…I’ll submit a plan to save Social Security, and I’ll ask Congress to do the same. I’ll work on a bipartisan basis to make the hard choices; to protect the retirement security of the American worker, and the growth of the American economy. And if Congress is afraid to make those choices, then they can just let me do it.”

“Automatic payroll deductions for employee IRA’s has proven to be an effective approach to encouraging and helping workers save for retirement, and I support them. I know that for many seniors, dividend and capital gains income is critical to a comfortable retirement, which is why I strongly support keeping capital gains and dividend taxes low.”

“There are 80 million family homes in America and those homeowners are now facing the reality that the bubble has burst and prices go down as well as up. Homeowners should be able to understand easily the terms and obligations of a mortgage. In return, they have an obligation to provide truthful financial information and should be subject to penalty if they do not. Lenders who initiate loans should be held accountable for the quality and performance of those loans and strict standards should be required in the lending process. We must have greater transparency in the lending process so that every borrower knows exactly what he is agreeing to and where every lender is required to meet the highest standards of ethical behavior.”
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Senator Barack Obama (D)

“I am committed to signing a universal health care plan into law by the end of my first term in office.”

“We all know the saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. But today we’re nowhere close to that ounce. We spend less than four cents of every health care dollar on prevention and public health even though eighty percent of the risk factors involved in the leading causes of death are behavior-related and thus preventable.

The problem is, there’s currently no financial incentive for health care providers to offer services that will encourage patients to eat right or exercise or go for annual check-ups and screenings that can help detect diseases early. The real profit today is made in treating diseases, not preventing them. That’s wrong, which is why in our new national health care plan...we will require coverage of evidence-based, preventive care services, and make sure they are paid for.

But in the end, prevention only works if we take responsibility for our own health and make the right decisions in our own lives.”

“‘The long-term care system is heavily biased towards institutional care—even though most people would rather remain at home—and the quality of care is often poor. Moreover, nursing home and home care are very expensive, and Medicare coverage for both is limited, making catastrophic expenses routine. As president, I will work to give seniors choices about their care, consistent with their needs, and not biased towards institutional care. I will work to reform the financing of long term care to protect seniors and families from impoverishment or debt. I will work to improve the quality of elder care, including by giving our long-term care and geriatric workforce the respect and support they deserve and training more nurses and health care workers in geriatrics.”

Democrats

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“Well let me be clear: privatizing Social Security was a bad idea when [it was proposed]. It’s a bad idea today. It would eventually cut guaranteed benefits by up to 50%. It would cost a trillion dollars that we don’t have to implement on the front end, permanently elevating our debt. And most of all, it would gamble the retirement plans of millions of Americans on the stock market. That’s why I stood up against this plan in the Senate, and that’s why I won’t stand for it as President.”

(Cleveland Plain Dealer, 06/13/08, http://blog.cleveland.com/openers/2008/06/excerpts_from_obamas_prepared.html)

“I am committed to ensuring Social Security is solvent and viable for the American people. I will be honest with the American people about Social Security and the ways we can address the long-term shortfall. I will protect Social Security benefits for current and future beneficiaries, oppose efforts to raise the retirement age and stand firmly against privatization. I believe that the first place to look for ways to strengthen Social Security is the payroll tax, which only applies to the first $102,000 a worker makes. I have consistently said that we should examine including a “donut hole” to ensure we do not increase the burdens on middle class Americans.”


“...I’ll establish an automatic workplace pension policy. Employers will be required to enroll workers in a direct deposit retirement account.... And the federal government will match savings for working families.”


“I will also expand the existing Savers Credit to match 50 percent of the first $1,000 of savings for families that earn under $75,000, and I will make the tax credit refundable.”


“To make sure that Americans know what they’re signing up for, I’ll institute a five-star rating system to inform consumers about the level of risk involved in every credit card. And we’ll establish a Credit Card Bill of Rights that will ban unilateral changes to a credit card agreement; ban rate changes to debt that’s already incurred; and ban interest on late fees.”


“...I rise today to reintroduce legislation to protect American consumers and homeowners from fraudulent and abusive mortgage lending practice. [The STOP FRAUD Act] also authorizes several grant programs to help State and local law enforcement fight fraud…”


“Senior citizens who make less than $50,000, we want to say to them: You don’t have to pay an income tax. You’re already having a hard time making ends meet.”


“Older Americans have a wide range of skills and knowledge to contribute to local and national public service efforts. New efforts are needed particularly to tap the idealism and experience of the baby boomer generation—the largest and healthiest generation to enter retirement in history.”

AARP is nonpartisan and does not have a political action committee (PAC), endorse political candidates, or make contributions to political parties or political candidates' campaigns. AARP educates the public about issues of concern to older Americans and their families through voter guides, issue workshops, and candidate debates.

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