



BARACK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN: STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S HEALTH

HEALTH CARE

Ensuring Quality Affordable Health Coverage for All Americans: More than 19 million women are uninsured in this country, and women are more likely than men to delay or not get medical care because of high costs. The Obama-Biden administration will ensure affordable health coverage for all Americans. His plan maintains patient choice, and establishes a National Health Insurance Exchange with a range of private insurance options as well as a new public health plan to allow individuals and businesses to buy affordable and accessible health coverage similar to that available to federal employees. The Obama-Biden health plan will provide tax credits to people so they can afford health care and will reduce the typical family's medical expenditures by \$2,500 per year while providing them with more health care options and greater security. The Obama-Biden plan will end insurance company discrimination and guarantee that all Americans – regardless of pre-existing conditions – will be able to purchase any private insurance plan at an affordable and fair price.

Ensure All Americans Have Access to Preventive Health Care: The Obama-Biden health plan will ensure that all Americans have access to preventive health care services. Their proposal creates a voluntary national pool, the National Health Insurance Exchange, comprised of a range of private plans and a new public plan. These plans as well as all federally supported health plans, including Medicare, Medicaid and SCHIP, will be required to cover all essential clinical preventive services with minimal or zero co-pays and deductibles. Under the Obama-Biden plan, women will have access to affordable coverage for maternity care, reproductive care, cancer screening and treatment, preventive care, mental health care, and other necessary services. Obama and Biden will also strengthen partnerships between federal, state and local public health authorities to expand access to proven community-based prevention programs, extend prevention efforts into workplaces and schools, and support federal initiatives.

Cover Every Child and Expand SCHIP: Barack Obama and Joe Biden are committed to making sure every child has health insurance. As a state senator, Obama sponsored and helped pass legislation that expands Illinois' KidCare program which provided coverage to 150,000 parents and children. In the United States Senate, he and Joe Biden have fought to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) program to another 3.4 million children across the country. An Obama-Biden administration will expand eligibility for Medicaid and SCHIP and ensure that these programs continue to serve their critical safety net function.

Empower Women to Prevent HIV/AIDS: In the United States, the percentage of women diagnosed with AIDS has quadrupled over the last twenty years. Today, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses. Women of color are especially hard hit: In 2004, HIV infection was the leading cause of death for African-American women between the ages of 25 and 34. Around the world, 7,000 women are infected with HIV every day. Barack Obama has been a leader in the global fight against AIDS. He introduced the Microbicide Development Act, which will accelerate the development of products that empower women in the battle against AIDS. Microbicides are a class of products currently under development that women apply topically to prevent transmission of HIV and other infections. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will also develop and begin to implement a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy that includes all federal agencies in their first year in office. The strategy will be designed to reduce HIV infections, increase access to care and reduce HIV-related health disparities.

Support Research, Diagnosis and Treatment to Improve Women's Health: Heart disease is the leading cause of death among women, accounting for nearly 39 percent of all female deaths. Studies show that after a first heart attack, women are less likely than men to receive diagnostic, therapeutic, and cardiac rehabilitation procedures, and are more likely to die or have a second heart attack. Barack Obama has fought to maintain funding for the Centers of Excellence in Women's Health at the Department of Health and Human Services. Barack Obama is also a cosponsor of the Women's Health Offices Act to permanently authorize women's health offices in all Department of Health and Human Services agencies and the HEART for Women Act to improve research and education on women and heart disease. The Obama-Biden health care plan combats health care disparities throughout health care system through greater research, outreach, training, and by requiring providers to report on the quality of care for disparity populations.

Fight Cancer: Barack Obama has spent his career fighting to improve prevention and treatment of cancer. As an Illinois State Senator, Obama passed laws to ensure Medicaid coverage for treatment of breast and cervical cancers, and helped create the Illinois Task Force on Cervical Cancer Elimination. In the U.S. Senate, Barack Obama was an original cosponsor of Johanna's Law, which increases awareness of ovarian cancer. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will double federal funding for cancer research within 5 years, expand access to lifesaving clinical trials, create a new cancer survivorship initiative at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and end insurance company discrimination against individuals with pre-existing conditions. Obama and Biden are also proud of their longtime support of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, a measure recently signed into law that will prevent insurance companies from using information from genetic tests to restrict or deny coverage to individuals at risk from cancer and other diseases. For women with breast cancer, ovarian cancers and other diseases that may be inherited, this provides critical protection against losing health insurance or a job because of an elevated risk.

Ensure Quality Care for our Women Veterans and Women in the Military: There are approximately 200,000 women serving in the military, another 140,000 women serving in our reserve and Guard forces, and there are over 1.5 million women veterans in our nation but they often do not get the health care they deserve. As a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, Barack Obama has introduced legislation to force the Pentagon and VA to better track the newest generation of veterans – including the number of women veterans – so that the VA can better plan their care. Obama also introduced legislation to fight homelessness among veterans, with a special focus on treating women who may have been victims of sexual trauma. Along with Senator Claire McCaskill, Obama has also cosponsored legislation to provide funding for additional caseworkers and mental health counselors, a women's mental health treatment program, and a comprehensive mental health study of returning soldiers. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will fight to ensure that women can get the care they deserve at the VA, and that all women veterans have access to staff and equipment on par with those provided to male veterans.

Reduce Health Risks Due to Mercury Pollution: More than five million women of childbearing age have high levels of toxic mercury in their blood and more than 630,000 newborns are born every year at risk. The EPA estimates that every year, more than one child in six could be at risk for developmental disorders because of mercury exposure in the woman's womb. Since the primary sources of mercury in fish are power plant emissions that contaminate our water, regulation of utility emissions is essential to protecting the health of our children. Barack Obama introduced two pieces of legislation to significantly reduce the amount of mercury that is deposited in oceans, lakes, and rivers, which in turn would reduce the amount of mercury in fish

Support Stem Cell Research: Barack Obama believes that we owe it to the American public to explore the potential of stem cells to treat the millions of people suffering from debilitating and life-threatening diseases. Obama is a cosponsor of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007, which would allow research of human embryonic stem cells derived from embryos donated (with consent) from *in vitro* fertilization clinics. These embryos must be deemed in excess and created based solely for the purpose of fertility treatment. As president, Obama will lift the current administration's ban on federal funding of research on embryonic stem

cell lines created after August 9, 2001 through executive order, and ensure that all research on stem cells is conducted ethically and with rigorous oversight.

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE AND HEALTH

Supports a Woman's Right to Choose: Barack Obama understands that abortion is a difficult issue, and respects those who disagree with him. However, he has been a consistent champion of reproductive choice and will make preserving women's rights under *Roe v. Wade* a priority as President. Barack Obama opposes lateterm abortions, but believes that there must be exceptions for the life and health of the woman.

Opposes Constitutional Amendment: Barack Obama opposes any constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court's abortion rights ruling in the *Roe v. Wade* case.

Prevent Unintended Pregnancy: Barack Obama is an original cosponsor of legislation to expand access to contraception, health information and preventive services to help reduce unintended pregnancies. Introduced in January 2007, the Prevention First Act will increase funding for family planning and comprehensive sex education that teaches both abstinence and safe sex methods. The Act will also end insurance discrimination against contraception, improve awareness about emergency contraception, and provide compassionate assistance to rape victims. Barack Obama also introduced the Communities of Color: Teen Pregnancy Prevention Act, which targets prevention efforts at teenage women who have higher risk for unintended pregnancy.

Restore Affordable Birth Control: Obama has introduced the Prevention through Affordable Access Act to restore affordable birth control to the more than 3 million college students and low-income women who lost access by a change in federal law in 2007. Obama will direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to issue revised regulations that will restore the ability of safety net providers and college health centers to purchase contraceptives from pharmaceutical companies at a discounted price. This will restore a practice that has been in place for decades, and does not increase costs to the government.

Improve Maternal Health and Reduce Infant Mortality: Women in the U.S. deserve high quality maternity care. Yet, there are large gaps between the care women currently receive and the quality of care that women need. The U.S. has a higher maternal mortality rate than most other developed countries and this rate has recently increased. African American women are more than three times more likely to die as of pregnancy-related complications than white women. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will accelerate research on maternal health and pregnancy complications and work to improve maternity outcomes and eliminate disparities in maternal health and infant mortality.

Protecting Against Violent Activists: Barack Obama supports the enactment and enforcement of laws that help prevent violence, intimidation and harassment directed at reproductive health providers and their patients.

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Make Domestic Violence A White House Priority: The Office of Violence against Women is currently located in the Department of Justice. The eradication of this major public health problem will require a coordinated effort from at least three governmental departments: health, education and justice. Safe and affordable housing is also a huge barrier to abused women finding freedom from violence. Sexual violence is a complex multi-system problem. No one agency can address all of the issues comprehensively. As president, as President, Barack Obama will appoint a special advisor who will report to him regularly on issues related to violence against women. This advisor will ensure that his agenda is coordinated across federal agencies and fully addresses prevention, programs, and the legal aspects of gender based violence. His administration will also issue a joint report on "best practices" across agencies and disseminate that information to the states.

Reduce Domestic Violence: One in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. Family violence accounted for 11 percent of all violence between 1998 and 2002. Barack Obama introduced legislation

to combat domestic violence by providing \$25 million a year for partnerships between domestic violence prevention organizations and fatherhood or marriage programs to train staff in domestic violence services, provide services to families affected by domestic violence, and to develop best practices in domestic violence prevention.

Strengthen Domestic Violence Laws: Approximately 1,400 women a year – four every day – die in the United States as a result of domestic violence. And 132,000 women report that they have been victims of a rape or attempted rape, and it is estimated that an even greater number have been raped, but do not report it. Barack Obama cosponsored the recent reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, a measure that Joe Biden first passed into law in 1994. This legislation funds and helps communities, nonprofit organizations, and police combat domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The legislation establishes a sexual assault services program and provides education grants to prevent domestic violence.

Fight Gender Violence Abroad: The genocide in Darfur has had particularly devastating consequences for women. Tens of thousands of women have been killed, raped, and displaced since the conflict began in 2003. Barack Obama has been a leading voice in Washington urging the end of genocide in Sudan. He worked with Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) on the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, a version of which was signed into law. Obama has traveled to the United Nations to meet with Sudanese officials and visited refugee camps on the Chad-Sudan border to raise international awareness of the ongoing humanitarian disaster there. He also worked with Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) to secure \$20 million for the African Union peacekeeping mission.

Paid for by Obama for America
