



# Resolution on National Healthcare Policy: Next Step

## Action needed this week

Please consider contacting your congressional representatives to ask them to take action on healthcare access.

## Background

At Mennonite Church USA Convention 2009, delegates overwhelmingly approved a resolution encouraging congregations and members **"to urge their congressional representatives to support legislation that would extend access to healthcare to all Americans, particularly the poor and disadvantaged."** This resolution built on an earlier resolution adopted at Charlotte 2005, articulating our theology of healthcare access: "Because the scriptural test of a just nation is how it treats its weakest members (*Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24, Jeremiah 5:26-29*), we will be clear and consistent advocates to policymakers on behalf of public health matters and access to healthcare for everyone."

Both the House and Senate are currently debating legislation that would dramatically extend health insurance coverage to Americans who are uninsured or who will become uninsured in the future. The legislation also addresses concerns about healthcare costs and quality. The legislative debate is at a ►

critical point and the next few weeks will likely determine whether Congress will adopt reform legislation or not. Our resolution does not endorse any particular legislation or legislative solution. It does, however, focus on the key issue of extending access to health care, particularly for the weakest members of our society.

Thursday, July 23, Mennonite Church USA faxed a cover letter from Jim Schrag, Mennonite Church USA Executive Director, and our resolution to representatives and senators from areas with highly concentrated Mennonite populations. Now we need you to reinforce our request "to support legislation that would extend access to healthcare to all Americans, particularly the poor and disadvantaged."

## Facts

- The most recent Census data found that 45.7 million Americans (15.3% of the population) were uninsured in 2007.
- Disproportionately, African Americans and Hispanics were uninsured.
- Many more people are currently uninsured than were uninsured at the time of this report because of the economic downturn. A study released this week concluded that 2.3 million Americans are losing health insurance every year, 44,230 per week.
- Although the uninsured are not necessarily denied access to all healthcare, many studies have shown that the uninsured get less care and get it later when it is less effective.

Detailed information for writing your letter and additional resources:  
**[www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace](http://www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace)**



## Resolution on National Healthcare Policy: Next Step

Adopted by Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly, Columbus, Ohio  
July 4, 2009

### Whereas:

1. In July of 2005, the Mennonite Church USA delegates approved *Healthcare Access Statement: Our Theology*, which states that “Because the scriptural test of a just nation is how it treats its weakest members (Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24, Jeremiah 5:26-29) we will be clear and consistent advocates to policymakers on behalf of public health matters and access to healthcare for everyone.”
2. Our *Healthcare Access Statement* also affirms that a biblically-compatible healthcare system would:
  - a. Celebrate God’s generous provision of resources, assuring enough for everyone when shared equitably by all (Genesis 1-2; Leviticus 25; Psalm 35:5-9; 2 Corinthians 8-9);
  - b. Promote the flourishing (shalom) of the whole community, including each of its members (John 13:34-35; Acts 2-4; Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12:12ff);
  - c. Protect the well-being of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society (Deuteronomy 10:17-19, 24:17-22; Psalm 72; Isaiah 1:16-17; Jeremiah 7:5-7; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 1:46-55, 4:16-21); and
  - d. Cultivate stewardship of God’s resources.
3. In 2007, several Mennonite Church agencies affirmed a set of *Healthcare Policy Principles*, including “Support for a healthcare system in which risks, cost and responsibility are shared by all,” and “Eliminate financial and health status as barriers to healthcare access.” These policies were received by the 2007 Mennonite Church delegate body.
4. 45.7 million Americans were uninsured in 2007 and many more are without health insurance today. Uninsured Americans are predominantly members of lower-income households and disproportionately members of minority groups. The uninsured get less medical care and get it later when it is less efficacious.

The Institute of Medicine has concluded that every year thousands of Americans die prematurely from lack of health insurance.

5. The United States Congress is currently considering legislation that could extend healthcare financing to many of those who currently find it difficult to get access to healthcare because they are uninsured.

Be it thereby resolved that:

1. We reaffirm our 2005 *Healthcare Access Statement* and affirm the 2007 *Healthcare Policy Principles*.
2. We will ask our members and congregations to urge their congressional representatives to support legislation that would extend access to healthcare to all Americans, particularly the poor and disadvantaged, while we engage local healthcare needs.
3. We will work together with others to bring about this result.
4. We will pray for healthcare access for Americans across our land, as well as those working on behalf of this issue.



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July 23, 2009

Dear Senator

I am writing to you as the executive director of Mennonite Church USA to inform you about an action taken by the delegate body at our biennial convention held earlier this month in Columbus, Ohio. The attached resolution asks “our members and congregations to urge their congressional representatives to support legislation that would extend access to health care to all Americans, particularly the poor and disadvantaged” and commits our church to “work together with others to bring about this result.” I trust that you will be hearing from our members as the resolution is disseminated to our churches, but in the meantime I wanted you to be aware of the fact that we have taken this action.

Mennonite Church USA is a Christian denomination with 105,000 members, many of whom are your constituents. Mennonites have a long history of involvement in the provision of health care for the needy. In particular, many of our members worked in mental hospitals as conscientious objectors during World War II, and after the war Mennonites went on to establish a number of mental hospitals and to make a major contribution to mental-health reform in the United States.

Our commitment to health care for the needy is based in Scripture. Indeed, the resolution we adopted this month built on an earlier resolution adopted at our 2005 convention that articulated our theology of health-care access. That resolution states: “Because the scriptural test of a just nation is how it treats its weakest members (Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24, Jeremiah 5:26-29), we will be clear and consistent advocates to policymakers on behalf of public health matters and access to healthcare for everyone.” Our witness on the issue of access to health care is also grounded in our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, which states that “We also witness by being ambassadors for Christ, calling the nations (and all persons and institutions) to move toward justice, peace, and compassion for all people.” Finally it is an outworking of the vision statement of our church, “God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.”

We do not as a denomination endorse any particular health-reform legislation or approach to health-care reform. Our resolution, however, urges consideration of one key principle for reform—priority for access to health care for all, and particularly for the poor and disadvantaged. We urge you to make this principle your priority as well.

The final clause of our resolution states that “we will pray for healthcare access for Americans across our land, as well as those working on behalf of this issue.” We assure you that our prayers are with you as you consider this momentous and difficult issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Schrag".

Jim Schrag  
Executive Director  
Mennonite Church USA

**PRAY  
AND ACT  
FOR  
PEACE**



## Prayer

God of Life, we pray this day for those whose dying is hastened by lack of access to health care.

**God of Love, we pray this day for the millions of people who do not have health care coverage, that their pain and anxiety will be relieved and that our hearts will be moved to help them.**

God of Justice, we pray this day that our nation will work as one to see that all people have the health care they need.

**God of the Weak, we pray this day for those who are too young, too sick, too ashamed, too discouraged to speak out for themselves and call for care.**

God of Power, we pray that all who are in positions of leadership will work together to solve the problem of people living without health insurance.

**God of Mercy, we pray for those whose suffering is unrelieved by care and for ourselves that we will work with others to assure care for all.**

God of All, you have made us in your image. Help us to reflect your goodness.

Amen.

*Written by Shannon Daley-Harris, M.Div*

From Cover the Uninsured, "Materials for Christian Prayer and Study"  
[www.covertheuninsured.org/files/u4/InterfaithChristianPrayerStudy.pdf](http://www.covertheuninsured.org/files/u4/InterfaithChristianPrayerStudy.pdf)



**PRAY  
AND ACT  
FOR  
PEACE**



Loving God,

We come to you this day confessing that we have not always loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are aware of people suffering for lack of health care coverage, yet we pass by on the other side.

We know there are children who struggle to grow and learn with untreated health problems, yet we pass by on the other side.

Families are crushed by medical bills and other financial burdens, yet we pass by on the other side.

When we encounter troubling situations that we don't know how to fix, we are tempted to pass by on the other side.

Stop us in our tracks, O God, and open our hearts so that we are not afraid to get involved in meeting the needs of those who are being ignored.

Make our hearts bold and loving and send us, in the name of your Son, to go and do likewise.

Amen.

*Written by Shannon Daley-Harris, M.Div*

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