

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4) today joined Congresswomen Allyson Schwartz (PA-13) and Lois Capps (CA-23) to launch a health care initiative aimed at dramatically improving Americans' access to quality, affordable health insurance through prevention, innovation and competition. As members of the centrist New Democratic Coalition, Altmire, Schwartz, and Capps bring over 60 years of health care policy experience to the Health Care Task Force and represent all three major Committees charged with shepherding health care policy through the U.S. House of Representatives. Altmire is a member of the Education and Labor Committee.

"The challenges facing our health care system - including rising costs, hospital acquired infections, and health disparities - can all be addressed through modernization," Altmire said. **"Greater deployment of health IT and electronic health records will lead to improved efficiency, higher quality care, and a system that rewards providers on patient outcomes, not simply the number of visits, operations, and tests."**

While America leads the world in economic and technological advancements, the U.S. has failed to translate these advantages into a health care system capable of handling 21st century challenges and demands. In 2006, insurance premiums reached an average of \$11,480, marking an 87% increase since 2000. Equally disturbing is that Fortune 500 health care costs will exceed profits next year.

The New Dem Health Care Task Force will focus on three key areas vital to improving quality and affordability in the U.S. health care system:

Prevention

Improving and expanding community based prevention through school and workplace based efforts;

Launching public-private partnerships to change behaviors that lead to chronic disease; and,
Creating seamless health care coverage, including fully portable insurance coverage.

Innovation

Adopting an interoperable HIT system to ensure information sharing across multiple providers;
Increasing patient safety and driving down medical costs through comprehensive implementation of e-prescribing; and,
Embracing comparative effectiveness research for new and existing medical procedures, drugs, and devices.

Competition

Allowing consumers to hold providers of health care accountable for both cost and quality of care by promoting value-based purchasing and evidence-based benefits;
Ensuring that doctors are educated and encouraged to use the most therapeutically effective, and cost efficient, medications first by rewarding use of clinically-based protocols from physician peers; and,
Establishing a timely approval of “follow-on” biologics that leads to billions in cost savings while protecting and promoting innovation.

Founded in 1997, the New Democrat Coalition has built a reputation as the “go-to” group in Congress on the critical issues of economic growth, technological innovation, and national security. New Democrats are committed to enacting policies that encourage economic growth, maintain U.S. competitiveness, meet the challenges posed by globalization in the 21st century, and strengthen our standing in the world. With fifty-seven House Members hailing from every region of the country, New Democrats are intent on modernizing the Democratic Party and the country.