

# Covering Health Issues

A Sourcebook for Journalists



**ALLIANCE FOR  
HEALTH REFORM**

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## LETTER TO READERS

Dear Reader,

The public and policymakers depend on you to keep them up to date on the health challenges facing our country, and ways we can deal with those challenges. We trust that this seventh edition of the Alliance for Health Reform's guide for reporters will help you do that, and we commend it to you.

There has never been a more important time for such enlightenment. The youngest of the baby boomers will enroll in Medicare in a few short years. The number of people without health coverage in the U.S. has been on the upswing since 2000. States are struggling to balance their health care responsibilities with competing needs. Racial and ethnic disparities in health care remain a problem. Your role is essential as we try to find our way to a health care system with fewer barriers to care and improved quality.

Along with the entire Alliance board and staff, we encourage you to keep this guide handy as a convenient source of information on some of the vital issues facing our country.



Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV  
Chairman



Sen. William H. Frist, M.D.  
Vice Chairman

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The entire Alliance for Health Reform staff and our capable interns contributed enormously to make this book all that it is. You can see them listed on page VI. Anne Montgomery wrote the original draft of the chapter on long-term care and the appendix on the congressional budget process. Bill Erwin drafted the chapter on disparities. But the roles the roles played by other Alliance staffers and interns were also tremendously important.

The sourcebook was designed again this year by Alisa Prendergast of Cyberonyx International in Stafford, VA, and was printed by Doyle Printing of Landover, MD.

## ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH REFORM'S MISSION

America's health care system is always a work in progress. Every year brings new challenges and new proposed solutions.

In the heat of debate, opinion leaders need an unbiased source of information so they can understand the roots of the nation's health care problems and the trade-offs posed by competing proposals for change. The Alliance for Health Reform exists to provide that information. We offer a full array of resources and viewpoints, in a number of formats, to elected officials and their staffs, journalists, policy analysts and advocates.

A nonpartisan, nonprofit group, the Alliance believes that all in the U.S. should have quality health coverage at a reasonable cost. But we do not lobby for any particular blueprint, nor do we take positions on legislation. Senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, a national leader in health policy, chairs the Alliance's board of directors and Senator William H. Frist of Tennessee, Senate majority leader and a heart and lung transplant surgeon, serves as the vice chairman. The diverse board includes distinguished leaders from the fields of health care, business, labor and consumer advocacy. Ed Howard, an attorney long active in national health care issues, heads the Alliance's staff.

Since 1991, the Alliance has organized hundreds of forums in Washington and around the nation, each presenting a balance of expert views. Our forums on Capitol Hill have become so popular that we often receive more than 250 registrations in a day's time. We cosponsor an annual retreat for Members of Congress dealing with health issues, and a separate retreat for senior congressional staff dealing working on these issues. We have briefed reporters, editorial writers and producers in newsrooms across the country on health policy debates in Washington and how they affect local citizens. The Alliance has previously published six highly regarded guides for journalists on covering health issues; you are holding the seventh.

We produce issue briefs periodically on current topics such as "The Uninsured and Rising Health Costs" and "HSAs and High-Deductible Health Plans: A Primer." The Alliance's media resource service assists journalists nationwide to develop articles and broadcasts on health care issues. We also maintain an online Find-an-Expert service for reporters which allows finely tuned searches designed for the differing needs of print and broadcast journalists.

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