

PAFCO Health Care Advocacy Project – Promoting Health Care Reform through citizen action

Embracing your Citizenship - CITIZEN ADVOCACY REMINDERS

- **Register to vote and VOTE!!! IT'S ABOUT POWER!**
- **Build relationships** and educate legislators about your issues. The system was designed to represent you unless you let the special and money interests control the power! Let legislators and public policy makers know what is important to you. Citizen advocacy is about persuasion, not debate. You are trying to get their vote for a solution, not win an argument.
- **Why will public policy makers listen to you?**
 - You are a constituent from their district, who VOTES!
 - You have good reliable information.
 - You are a trusted source based on professional background, community status or personal knowledge.
 - You are representative of a group they want support from.
 - Your comments are representative of broad based cross-section of politically active people.
- **Tell your story.** Note your business or expertise or family situation or family circumstances or professional expertise relevant to the particular program and why you are advocating for that program. Personal stories and experiences make the needs of vulnerable families come alive with passion and emotion and humanize the numbers and data. Be prepared with the facts, but make the facts real with compelling stories from your experience or from others. Tell your story in op-eds, letters to the editor, public meetings, and just sharing with family and friends --- and public policy makers.
- **Be clear about the message.** Make each message simple and direct. Be precise and typically cover only one topic in each message, letter, email, call or fax or visit. Three to five very short paragraphs in any advocacy email or letter is the maximum.
 - Identify yourself as voting constituent.
 - Identify your issue specifically, urge specific action,
 - Provide supporting facts or a story.
 - Specify action again
 - And always ask how they plan to vote and why?
 - Thank them.
- **Know your audience of policy makers:** Policy makers can fall into several categories about your issues:
 - Champions – They will lead with you for your cause.
 - Allies: They are always with you, but may not lead.
 - Mild opponents: They will oppose you most of the time.
 - Hard Core Opponents: They will lead/champion the opposition.
 - Persuables/Moderates: These are key targets for persuasion.
 - Expect disagreements and controversy. Be patient, direct without being argumentative. Be persistent with stories, data, and new information.

Ways You Can Help Fix America's and Arizona's Health Care System

EDUCATE YOUR SELF and learn the facts so you are informed participant in the public discussion and contribute solutions to improving and changing the system. Did you know that the U.S. is the only major industrialized country without universal health care coverage? Do you know how we compare to other countries on costs and outcomes? Good resources for factual information are listed on back page.

Critically evaluate any proposed solutions: For some thoughtful questions and critical questions, go to www.pafcoalition.org. Questions like: Will the plan really cover everyone? Does the plan, like Medicare, have a predictable, guaranteed level of benefits? How does the plan fit with your values of personal responsibility, community and shared responsibility, the nature of health care as human right, or a special privilege, or a marketplace commodity?

Talk with others. Share your own health care experiences and ask your friends about theirs. Most of us know someone who's had problems with the health care system. Learn about others' experience and use those stories to push for change. Tell your story and listen to others stories about the health care system. Use the stories to improve and change the system.

Let your views be known. Tell your lawmakers in simple, heartfelt language what you think what should be included in health care reform. Your voice gives your representatives the facts and support to do what's right. Don't forget your state legislators—there are many state initiatives pending. Write letters to the editor and express your opinions to newspaper and call in to radio talk shows. Making your views public gives others courage to speak out. Go the movie *Sicko* and let the newspaper and your lawmakers know how you feel about America's health care system. Go to public meetings and participate in creating solutions.

Join with others, get others involved and be persistent about health care reform for everyone. The system is broken; we need to find new ways to help fix the system for everyone, expand coverage, lower costs, and create quality health care for all. Health care reform is necessary but may take time and effort on all our parts. You can't do it alone but together we all can contribute to change. With elections on the horizon and discontent about the U.S. health care system running deep, we have a special window of opportunity to improve the system. You can be part of it.

- When sending emails, letters, faxes or calling always identify yourself as a voting constituent for your Legislator's district. As a voting constituent, you have great power.
- Accountability is the key to citizen power. Respectfully, politely and firmly, we must hold our legislators and elected officials accountable by asking them how and why they vote in particular way and WHY they vote. We then must organize during elections cycles for participation and accountability so we get the representation we want for all Arizona's families.
- Always thank the legislator for their service, but remind them you will also stay in touch. And be sure to thank your legislator when they do agree or vote as you urged. Always remember to thank them. Don't underestimate the power of an authentic "thank you." Remember our legislators are human beings too.
- Some **ADVOCACY DON'TS**
 - Don't Be Angry
 - Don't Be Hostile
 - Don't Threaten
 - Don't Have too much information
 - Don't Be Dishonest or Exaggerate
 - Don't visit policy makers alone, always go with others to help even out the power differences.
- It's about Coalition Building and Partnerships. It is about acting together for power!
- Together citizens have a great power and can make change. Acting with others rather than alone!!!! Mobilizing existing resources and creating new advocates. Remaining flexible. Building an email network and list – spreading the word!
- **IMPACT STATEMENTS AND SPECIFIC DATA ABOUT PARTICULAR HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS** can be found at THE PAFCO WEBSITE AT www.pafcoalition.org

The Protecting Arizona's Family Coalition (PAFCO) is a historic, diverse, non-partisan alliance of social services, health, community service agencies, advocacy groups, citizen advocacy, and faith-based associations. Hundreds of social, health, and community services agencies, human services groups, citizen action and advocacy groups, and faith-based congregations are represented in the Coalition. The Coalition agency and association members include an estimated 20,000 staff, board members and volunteers serving over 1.5 million people. PAFCO's mission is to protect and promote health and human services for the poor and vulnerable people. PAFCO provides education and advocacy through state legislative budget training and organizing, promotion of the unfinished agenda of unmet needs, health care reform citizen advocacy training, and federal health and human services budget advocacy. www.pafcoalition.org

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER EVALUATION

Arizona Town Hall – 2007 Recommendations on Health Care Reform
<http://www.aztownhall.org/pdf/90th%20Report.pdf>

AARP – Divided We Fail Campaign
<http://www.aarp.org/issues/dividedwefail/>

Campaign for America's Future
<http://home.ourfuture.org/healthcareforall/>

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
www.CoverTheUninsured.org

Kaiser Family Foundation.
<http://www.kaisernetwork.org/>
 Or
<http://www.kff.org/>

St. Lukes Health Initiatives
<http://www.slhi.org/>

Protecting Arizona's Family Coalition
www.pafcoalition.org

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For more information or to sign on with the Coalition:
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