

Health care Debate Lesson Overview

Topic: NATIONAL DISCUSSION AND DEBATE SERIES: HEALTH CARE Guide Overview:

A variety of lessons and activities are provided to help students gain the knowledge and background necessary to engage in a meaningful debate about the following resolution: *Health care is a fundamental right; the government has an obligation to secure this right for all Americans.* Teachers may opt to complete all the assignments in preparation for the debate, or select those most necessary or interesting to the class. Classes may prepare their debate for submission to the Miller Center National Discussion and Debate Series.

Time: 3-7 class periods, depending on activities chosen and time allotted for each activity

Introduction:

Ideas for introducing the topic of health care reform:

- Before beginning the health care lessons, ask students to write down five health related headlines over the course of a week and bring them to class. Call on student volunteers to read their headlines. What health related issues are in the news? What are people most concerned about? Ask students to share what they know about health care reform – what are the current challenges facing the American health care system?
- Read the introduction to the Miller Center white paper: [The Right to Health Care and The Role of Government in Health Policy](#) as a class. Outline the current challenges facing the American health care system.
- Use the [Just The Facts](#) chart from Yes! Magazine's health care issue to give students an overview of the health care reform debate. Why does America spend more per capita on health care than any other nation, but still rank 28th in life expectancy? Why are insurance premiums rising so quickly? How can we cap health care spending? Is universal health insurance a tenable option in the United States? Outline the current challenges facing the American health care system.

Lesson One – An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure

Rising rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes and skyrocketing costs of accompanying treatments suggest that the debate about health care reform requires a thoughtful examination of the factors that contribute to health and disease so that healthy behaviors can be promoted and chronic disease reduced and prevented.

Activities:

- Interpret research findings about the cost of chronic disease
- Make a photo collage of healthy and unhealthy behaviors
- Class discussion about health care reform and chronic disease

Lesson Two – Health Insurance Overview

Though most students are currently covered under their parent's health insurance plans, many will soon secure jobs and health benefits of their own. Before students can engage in meaningful debate about the challenges and benefits of the current health care system, they must understand its jargon and structure. This lesson provides students with the

opportunity to analyze and compare a variety of health care plans in order to increase their familiarity with the terms and concepts used in the health care debate.

Activities:

- Vocabulary Builder
- Basic overview of health insurance (teacher lecture)
- Health care on Minimum Wage Teacher's Guide & Worksheet
- Understanding Health Benefits worksheet and group work

Lesson Three – Health care Interviews

Despite some attempts to personalize the health care debate, people's individual stories tend to get lost among politically charged reform plans and complex jargon. Interviews allow students to hear local perspectives on the health care debate and put a personal face on a national issue.

Activities:

- Health care Interviews
- Compare class findings to national polls
- Class discussion about interviews

Lesson Four – Health care: A Right or a Privilege?

In recent national polls and surveys, many people have indicated that they would like some form of universal basic health care. What constitutes basic health care? If basic health care is a right, what responsibilities accompany that right? With treatment costs for chronic diseases continuing to rise, does the government have a right to ban unhealthy behaviors such as smoking in exchange for basic coverage? What would universal health insurance look like in the United States?

Activities:

- Right vs. Privilege scenarios and discussion
- Comparing the U.S. health system to other nations
- Regulating Health handout
- Health care Reform worksheet

Lesson Five – Dueling Presidential Proposals

Students will discuss the liberal and conservative approaches to health care reform and compare the proposals of the 2008 presidential candidates.

Activities:

- 2008 Health care Buzzwords
- Comparing liberal and conservative viewpoints on health care reform
- Analyzing presidential candidate proposals

Lesson Six – Health care Student Debate

Students will debate the Miller Center resolution: "Health care is a fundamental right; the government has an obligation to secure this right for all Americans."

Activities:

- Student Debate Guide
- Debate

Supplements

- **Link to National Standards**
- **Suggested Research Links**

Extensions

- Invite members of the community who are involved in health care to speak to the class about health care reform.
- For more information and lesson ideas about Medicare and Medicaid, use the PBS NOW lesson plan: <http://www.pbs.org/now/classroom/medicare.html#sites>
- For more information and lessons about the uninsured and underinsured in America, use the Online NewsHour Health Beat in-depth coverage: “The Uninsured In America.”
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/health/uninsured/index.html
- Brainstorm student proposals for increasing healthy behaviors at the community level. Research ways students can help to implement some of the proposals. Share what your students are doing with PBS Online NewsHour and the Miller Center.
- Ask students to record how many pharmaceutical commercials they see during one hour of television. How do pharmaceutical commercials impact the current American health care system? How might pharmaceutical commercials impact the cost of insurance premiums? How do pharmaceutical companies and lobbyists shape the American model of health care?
- Healthy eating habits contribute to strong overall health, while unhealthy eating contributes to the development of chronic diseases. What factors impact American eating habits? What can Americans do to promote healthy eating? Is healthy eating a matter of income and access, and if so, how can Americans help equalize the amount of healthy food available to all? How do corn subsidies and the Farm Bill impact American eating habits, and by extension, the health care system? Does health care reform also require reforming the food and agricultural industries?
- Environmental pollutants also affect health. Research the environmental factors that impact people’s health. How can Americans help decrease exposure to environmental pollutants? Will saving the environment save medical costs as well?

Lesson One: An Ounce of Prevention is Worth A Pound of Cure

Overview: The current health care reform debate focuses on ways to extend coverage to the uninsured and cap soaring health care costs. Rising rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes and skyrocketing costs of accompanying treatments suggest that meaningful reform also requires a thoughtful examination of the factors that contribute to health and disease so that healthy behaviors can be promoted and chronic disease reduced and prevented. This lesson helps students assess the current state of American health and brainstorm strategies for promoting healthy behaviors.

Time: 45-55 minutes

Objectives:

1. Understand how chronic disease impacts health care costs
2. Examine the behaviors that cause or prevent chronic diseases
3. Discuss strategies that will promote health and prevent disease
4. Analyze the connection between prevention and health care reform

Materials:

- [An Unhealthy America Research Findings](#) (p.14-15)
- A stack of old magazines
- Butcher paper
- Board or overhead projector

Procedure:

1. Post the following quote and statistics on the board or overhead. Ask a volunteer to read the quote to the class.

“Reducing the avoidable costs associated with [chronic] conditions [diabetes, cancer, hypertension, stroke, pulmonary conditions, mental disorders, and heart disease] is central to meeting the twin challenges of promoting affordable health care and fostering continued economic growth. We have a choice: continue on the current path or alter it by changing our behaviors and focusing on prevention and early intervention.”

- *162 million cases of chronic diseases in America, which costs the economy \$1.3 trillion annually (\$277 billion in treatment and \$1.1 trillion in lost productivity)*
- *Assuming modest improvements in preventing and treating disease, we could avoid 40 million cases of chronic disease annually and reduce the economic impact of disease by 27% by 2023*
- *Lower obesity rates alone could produce productivity gains of \$254 billion and avoid \$60 billion in treatment expenditures per year*

(Source: Devol, Ross and Armen Bedroussian. The Milken Institute. “An Unhealthy America: The Economic Burden of Chronic Disease - Charting a New Course to Save Lives and Increase Productivity and Economic Growth.” October 2007. http://www.milkeninstitute.org/pdf/chronic_disease_report.pdf)

2. Ask students the following questions:

- What do you think is causing the rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes to rise in the United States?
 - According to the statistics listed here, what is the economic impact of lowering obesity rates and making modest improvements in chronic disease prevention?
 - What do you think will prevent the growth of chronic disease rates?
 - How do you think the growing rates of chronic diseases are affecting the current health care system?
3. The above quote asserts that we can “continue on the current path or alter it by changing our behaviors and focusing on prevention and early intervention.” How do we promote healthy behaviors and prevent the behaviors that lead to chronic diseases? Instruct students to divide a piece of paper into two columns. Label one column “Healthy Behaviors.” Label the second column “Unhealthy Behaviors.” Give students 2-3 minutes to brainstorm behaviors for each column.
 4. Divide students into small groups. In groups, students will share their lists. Distribute old magazines and a piece of butcher paper to each group. Again, students will divide the butcher paper into two columns. Instruct students to find images in the magazine that promote or represent the behaviors they listed. On the left side of the paper, students will make a photo collage of healthy behaviors. On the right side, students will make a photo collage of unhealthy behaviors. Ask students to write down insights or questions they have while making the collage.
 5. When all groups have finished, ask each group to share its list and photo collage. Make two columns on the board and ask a student volunteer to record healthy and unhealthy behaviors as each group shares.
 6. View the list of healthy and unhealthy behaviors as a class. Use the following questions to promote class discussion:
 - What insights or questions did you have while completing this activity?
 - How are the behaviors listed in the healthy column promoted or suppressed by American society, media, the government, your community, or your school? How are the behaviors listed in the unhealthy column promoted or suppressed?
 - List factors that cause people to engage in unhealthy behaviors. What factors encourage people to engage in healthy behaviors?
 - What changes could the federal, state or local government make to promote health and prevent disease? How could other groups or individuals promote health and prevent disease? (*Example: Increase farm to school alliances so that fresh food is available to students, promote safe walking trails, increase the amount of bike lanes available, etc.*)
 - How might these changes impact health care spending and reform?

Lesson Two: Health Insurance Overview

Overview:

Though most students are currently covered under their parent's health insurance plans, many will soon secure jobs and health benefits of their own. Before students can engage in meaningful debate about the challenges and benefits of the current health care system, they must understand its jargon and structure. This lesson provides students with the opportunity to analyze and compare a variety of health care plans in order to increase their familiarity with the terms and concepts used in the health care debate.

Time: 45-55 minutes

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Define basic health care terminology
2. Understand basic health insurance options
3. Analyze the connection between income and health care options
4. Define the term "underinsured."

Materials:

1. Internet access
2. Vocabulary Builder worksheet
3. Health care on Minimum Wage Worksheet
4. Health care on Minimum Wage Teacher's Guide
5. Sample health insurance plans from area businesses
6. Understanding Health Benefits Worksheet

Procedure:

1. Complete a vocabulary builder exercise before proceeding with this lesson.
2. Use the [How We Are Insured](#) and [The U.S. versus Other Nations](#) sections on the NewsHour Web site to provide students with a basic overview of health insurance in the United States. Explain co-payments, premiums, deductibles, pre-existing conditions, and the difference between HMOs and PPOs.
3. Distribute the "Health care on Minimum Wage" worksheet to each student. Post Mary's sample minimum wage paycheck on the board or overhead. Read Mary's story as a class and answer any questions students may have. Allow students time to answer the questions and then discuss answers as a class.
4. Divide students into small groups. Bring a variety of health insurance Explanation of Benefits packages from area businesses. Distribute one Explanation of Benefits package to each group. (As an alternative, ask students to go to area businesses they are interested in and ask about the benefits the companies offer.) Students will read through the plans and complete the

Understanding Health Benefits worksheet. Check on each group and explain confusing terms or concepts as needed.

5. When all students have finished, each group will provide an overview of their assigned insurance plan and share the group's answers to the discussion questions.

Vocabulary Builder Activities

Vocabulary Terms

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Universal Health Insurance | Co-Payment |
| Medicare | Cost Sharing |
| Medicaid | Deductible |
| Managed Care | Employer Sponsored Coverage |
| Health Savings Account | Preventative Care |
| Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) | Fee-for-Service Plan |
| Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) | Private Care |
| Cobra | Mandated Employer Insurance |
| Co-Insurance | Primary Care Provider |
| Premium | Subsidized Health Insurance |
| Uninsured | Single-payer System |
| Underinsured | Third-party Payer |

Vocabulary Activities

- 1. News Report** – Write an editorial answering the following question: Do Americans have a right to health care? Use at least five vocabulary terms in the editorial.
- 2. Teachable Moment** – A foreign exchange student is coming to study at your school. She or he asks you to explain the American model of health insurance. Write a brief explanation of the American model of health insurance using at least five vocabulary terms. Divide into pairs and take turns explaining the insurance system.
- 3. Commercial Break** – Develop a commercial advertising your ideas for health care reform. Use at least three vocabulary terms in your commercial. Present your commercial to the class.
- 4. Vocabulary Match** – Write the definition of each vocabulary term on strips of paper. Write each vocabulary term on separate strips of paper. Distribute the vocabulary terms to some students and the definitions to others. Allow students to walk around the room to find their match. Each pair must then use the term correctly in a sentence.
- 5. Human Resources** – You work for the human resources department at a large firm. Your job is to explain health care benefits to new employees. Explain your company's benefit package using at least three vocabulary terms.

Health Care on Minimum Wage: Teacher's Guide

Example: Mary's Bi-Weekly Minimum Wage Paycheck in Arizona

| Earnings | Rate | Hours | This Pay Period | Year To Date |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Regular | \$5.85 | 80 | \$468 | |
| | | | | |
| | Gross Pay | | \$468 | \$11,232 |
| | | | | |
| Deductions | | | | |
| | Federal Income Tax | \$40.20 | | |
| | Social Security Tax | \$29.02 | | |
| | Medicare Tax | \$6.79 | | |
| | State Income Tax | \$4.02 | | |
| | Health Insurance | \$26.54 | | |
| | | | | |
| Net Pay | | | \$361.43 | \$8,674.32 |

Mary's Story:

Mary is a high school graduate who decided to work for a few years before entering college. She is no longer eligible for her parent's insurance and has signed up for her company's PPO health insurance plan. She pays \$637 per year for her insurance premium, and has a \$400 yearly deductible. After she meets the deductible, her insurance will cover 80% of any treatment, while she will be responsible for 20% of the treatment. Her doctor visit co-pay is \$15, her emergency room co-pay is \$75, and her hospital co-pay is \$100 for pre-approved admissions. Her co-pays for prescription medications are \$11 for generic drugs and \$24 for preferred drugs. Mary does not get paid time off work. Mary has two roommates, and her share of the rent and utilities comes to \$300 per month. Because she owns a used car, she has no monthly car payment, but she does pay \$80 per month for car insurance and an average of \$120 per month for gas, bringing her average monthly expenses, not counting groceries, to \$500.

Discussion Questions:

1. How much money does Mary have left over each month to spend on food, other needs or wants, or put in a savings account? **\$222.86**
2. How might Mary's financial situation impact her healthy or unhealthy behaviors? (i.e. type of food she buys, how often she exercises, stress levels, etc.) *Mary will probably buy inexpensive food which typically includes highly processed food. Because Mary is working full time to make ends meet, she doesn't have much time to prepare healthy meals or exercise. High stress levels, unhealthy eating habits, and lack of exercise all put Mary at risk for several chronic diseases later in life.*

3. What percentage of Mary's income does she spend on health insurance? *Her premium, not including her deductible, co-pays, or medications, accounts for 7% of her income.*

4. How might Mary's financial situation impact her decision to go to the doctor when she is ill? *Because she will miss time from work and she is struggling to make ends meet anyway, Mary will probably avoid going to the doctor until she is seriously ill, likely increasing her cost of treatment.*

5. Mary gets pneumonia and decides to go to the doctor for treatment. The doctor prescribes a preferred medication. Mary misses three days of work. How much does this illness cost Mary? *\$140.40 for missed work, \$24 for preferred prescription, and \$15 co-pay for doctor visit = \$179.40.*

6. A few months later, Mary is sick again but decides that she cannot afford to go to the doctor this time. Unfortunately, her condition worsens. She is hospitalized for two days and misses eight days of work. Her hospital stay, including medications, costs \$2,500. How much does this hospital visit cost Mary (including deductible, co-pay, her 20% share of the cost, and missed work days)? *\$500 for her 20%, \$100 co-pay, \$400 deductible, \$374.40 for missed work = \$1374.40*

7. What can Mary do, within her financial constraints, to promote her health and prevent illness? *Answers will vary.*

8. Mary's company pays a percentage of its employees' health care premiums which are rising at an alarming rate. What types of things could Mary's company do to promote healthy behaviors in their employees and prevent illness? *Answers will vary.*

9. What could the community, state, or national government do to help workers like Mary? How could the community, state, or national government help Mary's company promote healthy behaviors? *Answers will vary*

10. Why might people in Mary's situation choose to be uninsured? *They would rather take the chance that they will not get ill so that they can keep needed income each month and make ends meet.*

11. Why might people in Mary's situation be considered underinsured? *Because Mary makes so little money, any illness threatens to put Mary in financial hardship.*

Health Care on Minimum Wage Worksheet

| Earnings | Rate | Hours | This Pay Period | Year To Date |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Regular | \$5.85 | 80 | \$468 | |
| | | | | |
| | Gross Pay | | \$468 | \$11,232 |
| | | | | |
| Deductions | | | | |
| | Federal Income Tax | \$40.20 | | |
| | Social Security Tax | \$29.02 | | |
| | Medicare Tax | \$6.79 | | |
| | State Income Tax | \$4.02 | | |
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Example: Mary's Bi-Weekly Minimum Wage Paycheck in Arizona

Mary's Story:

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Discussion Questions:

1. How much money does Mary have left over each month to spend on food and other needs or wants? How much money does Mary have left over to put in a savings account?
2. How might Mary's financial situation impact her healthy or unhealthy behaviors? (i.e. type of food she buys, how often she exercises, stress levels, etc.)

3. What percentage of Mary's income does she spend on health insurance?

4. How might Mary's financial situation impact her decision to go to the doctor when she is ill?

5. Mary gets pneumonia and decides to go to the doctor for treatment. The doctor prescribes a preferred medication. Mary misses three days of work. How much does this illness cost Mary?

6. A few months later, Mary is sick again but decides that she cannot afford to go to the doctor this time. Unfortunately, her condition worsens. She is hospitalized for two days and misses eight days of work. Her hospital stay, including medications, costs \$2,500. How much does this hospital visit cost Mary (including deductible, co-pay, her 20% share of the cost, and missed work days)?

7. What can Mary do, within her financial constraints, to promote her health and prevent illness?

8. Mary's company also pays a percentage of health care premiums, which continue to rise. What types of things could Mary's company do to promote healthy behaviors in their employees and prevent illness?

9. What could the community, state, or national government do to help workers like Mary? How could the community, state, or national government help Mary's company promote healthy behaviors?

10. Why might people in Mary's situation choose to be uninsured?

11. Why might people in Mary's situation be considered underinsured?

Understanding Health Care Benefits Worksheet

Directions:

Read through the company's explanation of benefits package as a group and use it to answer the following questions.

1. What type of plan does this company offer? (an HMO, PPO, etc.?)

2. How much are the insurance premiums per month?

3. Does the company offer paid time off work?

4. What percentage of your monthly pay goes to health insurance?

5. Does the insurance cover preventative visits?

6. Does the insurance reward healthy behaviors?

7. How much are your co-pays for doctor visits?
For emergency room visits?
For hospital admissions?
For prescriptions?

8. Do you have a deductible? If so, how much is it per year?

What percentage of your income is this deductible?

9. Based on your insurance, how likely would you be to go to the doctor? Explain your reasoning.

10. What other notes or insights do you have about this insurance?

11. What would you change about this insurance plan if you could?

Lesson Three: Health Care Interviews

Overview:

Despite some attempts to personalize the health care debate, people's individual stories tend to get lost among politically charged reform plans and complex jargon. Interviews allow students to hear local perspectives on the health care debate and put a personal face on a national issue.

Time: 45-55 minutes

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Understand how the current health insurance system impacts people in the local community.
2. Analyze national suggestions for health care reform and compare them to local suggestions

Materials:

- Health care Interview Form
- Index Cards
- [The Right to Health Care and The Role of Government in Health Policy](#)

Procedure:

Before Class:

1. Assign students to interview one person about her or his experiences with the current health care system and her or his views on health care reform. If students have access to cameras, ask them to take a photo of the person they interview. (Note: Be sure that students ask permission to photograph the person and to post the photograph.) Students will use the Health care Interview Form to guide the interview.

During Class:

1. Students will summarize the interview on an index card (See Below). Hang index cards and photos (if available) on a clothesline around the classroom or in the hallway.

Name – Photo

Favorite Quote

Problems/Challenges with Current Health care System

Suggestions for Reform

Thoughts/Insights

2. Allow students to walk around the room to view all of the cards. As students walk around the room, ask them to record their favorite quote, the most common problems people have with the health care system, and the most common suggestions for reform.

3. When all students are seated, ask them to share their favorite quotes. On the board make a list of the most common problems people have with the current health care system. Make a second list of the most common suggestions for reform. What questions or insights do students have after viewing the interview cards?
4. Read Section V of [The Right to Health Care and The Role of Government in Health Policy](#) individually. How does the white paper overview of challenges to and suggestions for health care reform compare with what students heard in the interviews?

Health care Interview

Date:

Person Interviewed:

Questions:

1. What do you do for a living?
2. Do you have health insurance? If so, what type of insurance plan do you have?
3. Are you satisfied with the care you receive?
4. Are you satisfied with the cost of your insurance?
5. Explain one positive experience, if any, you have had with your health insurance.
6. Explain one negative experience, if any, you have had with your health insurance.
7. What do you see as the main problems with the current health care system in the United States?
8. What suggestions do you have to reform the current health care system?
9. Would you be in favor of universal health insurance in the United States? If so, how do you propose it should be financed? If not, why not?
10. What other thoughts would you like to share about the health care system in America?

Your Favorite Quote From the Interview:

Thoughts and Observations:

Lesson Four: Is Health Care a Right or a Privilege?

Overview:

In recent national polls and surveys, many people have indicated that they would like some form of basic universal health care. What constitutes basic health care? If basic health care is a right, what responsibilities accompany that right? With treatment costs for chronic diseases continuing to rise, does the government have the right to ban unhealthy behaviors such as smoking in exchange for basic coverage? What might universal health insurance look like in the United States? These are some of the essential questions facing health care reformers. Use the following activities to facilitate critical discussion of these essential questions.

Time: Two 45 minute class periods

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Define a right and a privilege.
2. Debate whether health care is a right or a privilege.
3. Determine an appropriate level of government involvement in financing and regulating health care.
4. Determine what should be included in basic health care
5. Compare the U.S. model of health care to other nations

Materials:

- [U.S. vs. Other Nations](#) chart
- Regulating Health worksheet
- Health care Reform worksheet
- [If You Ask Maine](#) article (optional)

Procedure:

1. Divide the board into two columns: Rights and Privileges. Ask students to define a right and to brainstorm examples of rights. Then ask students to define a privilege and to brainstorm examples of privileges. What is the difference between a right and a privilege?
2. Designate one side of the room as a “right” and the other as a “privilege.” Ask students the following question and instruct them to go to the side of the room that corresponds with their answer. Is access to health care a right or a privilege? Ask students from each side to explain their reasoning.
3. Many people have indicated in national polls and surveys that they agree with some form of basic health insurance for all U.S. citizens. What constitutes basic health insurance? Should any available treatment be offered to everyone or do you have to draw the line? Should there be any out of pocket costs or should the government pay for all treatment? Read the following cases and ask students whether they consider the treatment in the case to be a right or a privilege. Instruct students to go to the side of the room that corresponds with their answer. After you read each case, call on students from each side to explain their reasoning.

When you are finished with the exercise, ask students to share insights or questions they have.

- Jim breaks his leg and requires a cast.
 - Sarah is due to receive her Polio vaccine.
 - Joe drinks heavily and develops cirrhosis of the liver. He currently needs to be hospitalized to stabilize his condition.
 - Joe would like to enroll in a program to help him treat his alcoholism.
 - Susan has her yearly mammogram and discovers she has breast cancer. The doctors recommend a mastectomy along with chemotherapy.
 - Susan would like reconstructive surgery after her mastectomy.
 - Sharon has had difficulty getting pregnant and would like to try in vitro fertilization to help her conceive.
 - Sharon is pregnant and would like to receive pre-natal care and counseling.
 - Sharon would like to have her child at home with a midwife.
 - Kara, who has smoked for twenty years, has lung cancer. The doctors recommend surgery and chemotherapy.
 - James is morbidly obese. He would like to receive gastric bypass surgery to help him lose weight.
 - Jenny is depressed and is on several antidepressants. She would like to see a psychiatrist to help her with her depression.
 - Jordan has diabetes and requires daily insulin monitoring. He needs an insulin pump and other equipment.
4. How does the U.S. system compare to health care systems in other industrial countries? Use the [U.S. vs. Other Nations](#) chart on the NewsHour Web site to guide students through an overview of health care in other nations. Ask students whether each country profiled views health care as a right or a privilege. Instruct them to support their answer with information from the chart.
 5. If the federal government does fund some form of basic insurance for everyone, does the government then have the right to intervene in lifestyle decisions? For example, chronic conditions resulting from unhealthy behaviors cost billions of dollars to treat. Does the government, then, have the right to ban certain unhealthy behaviors or products such as cigarettes, French fries, or soda? Distribute or post the “Regulating Health” handout. Complete individually or as a class. Call on students to explain their answers.
 6. Divide students into small groups. Distribute the Health Care Reform worksheet. Read the overview as a class. [If you have more time, read the full article as a class: [If You Ask Maine.](#)]
 7. When all groups are finished, a group representative will present the group’s plan to the class. Write group recommendations on the board. After all groups have presented, develop a class plan. Submit the class plan to your state and local leaders.

Regulating Health

Overview: In the absence of a national consensus about health care reform, many cities have taken the lead in providing health care and protecting their residents' health and welfare. For example, San Francisco provides universal health access for its residents, while New York and Chicago ban unhealthy ingredients, such as trans fat, or unhealthy behaviors such as smoking. What is the government's role in regulating healthy and unhealthy behavior, especially if the government bears the financial responsibility for health care? It is a fine balance between personal freedom and the government's responsibility to provide for the health and welfare of the majority of its citizens. Have these local governments gone too far?

Directions: Read the issues below, then circle the statement with which you agree. Be prepared to defend your reasoning!

The Issue: Trans fat, used to fry many common foods such as French fries and doughnuts, raises cholesterol levels, clogs arteries, and increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. In 2006, New York City passed legislation requiring all city restaurants to eliminate trans fat by July 2008, creating an uproar in the restaurant industry. Restaurants may still serve fried foods, but they will have to find healthier frying oils if they want to continue to operate in New York City. Has New York City gone too far in trying to legislate people's diets or is the city government fulfilling its responsibility to protect its residents' health and welfare?

New York City should ban trans fat:

New York City should not ban trans fat:

The Issue: In 2007, San Francisco began its Healthy San Francisco Plan, designed to provide health care for all San Francisco citizens, including an estimated 82,000 uninsured. Under the plan, all uninsured residents can seek care at the city's public and private clinics and hospitals. The basic coverage, which is about access to health care rather than health insurance, includes lab work, prescriptions, x-rays, surgery, and preventative care. The city plans to pay for this \$203 million coverage by rerouting the \$104 million the city currently spends treating the uninsured in emergency rooms, mandating business contributions, and requiring income-adjusted enrollment fees. The plan requires all businesses with more than 20 employees to contribute a percentage toward the plan, a mandate many area business owners consider too burdensome. Some business owners warn that businesses will not stay in the city if the plan is approved. The mayor, however, sees universal health access as a moral obligation for the city.

San Francisco has an obligation to provide its citizens with health access:

San Francisco does not have an obligation to provide its citizens with health access:

The Issue: San Francisco, which currently funds a health access program that guarantees basic health care for all its residents, passed legislation in March 2008 that requires chain restaurants to post nutritional information on their menus. The legislation is designed to help people make informed decisions about healthy eating and aims to curb rising obesity and diabetes rates. Opponents say that menu labeling will not change people's eating habits, and is an unfair burden to restaurants.

San Francisco should require chain restaurants to post nutrition information:

San Francisco should not require chain restaurants to post nutrition information:

The Issue: In 2008, Chicago banned smoking in all public places, including bars, restaurants, beaches, and parks. The bans are designed to protect people from the negative health effects of secondhand smoke. Opponents of the plan believe that the government does not have the right to interfere with a business owner's choice to regulate smoking in his or her own establishment.

Chicago should ban smoking:

Chicago should not ban smoking:

Health Care Reform

Overview:

In 2005, Maine faced a health care crisis: 12% of Maine residents were uninsured, and 38% paid more than 5% of their income for insurance. The legislature turned to its citizens for help. In May 2005, the state government hosted a forum called Tough Choices, which asked citizens to sort through several health care options and to develop possible funding options for the state health program. The state listened and developed DirigoChoice, a state insurance program targeted at small businesses, sole proprietors, and un- or underinsured individuals. It offers benefits including prescriptions, preventative care, and sliding-scale discounts for those with household incomes under 300 percent of the federal poverty level.

Scenario:

Your city is hosting the next Tough Choices forum. Use the guiding questions below to develop your own health care reform package that you will present at the forum.

Questions:

- Do you believe access to health care is a right or a privilege?
- Who will be covered by your health plan?
- Is your plan an access plan (meaning that everyone eligible will have access to basic services within a certain area) or an insurance plan (meaning that individuals will have insurance that entitles them to basic services at both in-plan and out-of-plan service providers)?
- What, if any, preventative services will be included?
- What basic health services will be included?
- What, if any, services will people be expected to pay out of pocket?
- How will you encourage healthy behavior?
- How will you discourage unhealthy behavior?
- How will your plan be financed?
- What financial responsibility will businesses have? What financial responsibility will individuals have? What financial responsibility will the government have?

Other thoughts, insights, or ideas:

Lesson Five: Dueling Proposals

Overview:

Students will discuss the liberal and conservative approaches to health care reform and compare the proposals of the 2008 presidential candidates.

Time: 45-55 minutes

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Understand the liberal and conservative approaches to health care reform.
2. Compare the proposals of the 2008 presidential candidates.

Materials:

- Internet Access
- [The Right to Health Care and the Role of Government in Health Policy](#)
- [“Separating the Forest From the Trees in the Health care Debate.”](#)

Procedure:

1. Show the Kaiser Family Foundation video [“2008 health care buzzwords”](#) (18 seconds). Divide students into groups and assign each group one buzzword (see below). Allow time for students to research the buzzword or concept and define its key principles. When all students are finished, a group representative will explain the buzzword to the class. Assign students to watch for buzzwords in the Miller Center debate.
 - Shared responsibility
 - Universal Health care Assistance
 - Health Savings Account
 - Full tax deductibility of all medical expenses
 - Socialized Medicine
2. Instruct half the students to read Section II – “U.S. Health care Caught Between Liberals and Conservatives” – of the Miller Center white paper: [The Right to Health Care and the Role of Government in Health Policy](#), starting with the section “The 30-50 Year Liberal-Conservative Cycle.” Instruct the other half of the class to read the Kaiser Family Foundation article: [“Separating the Forest From the Trees in the Health care Debate.”](#) Call on students from each group to list liberal views on health care and conservative views on health care. What are the similarities between liberals and conservatives? What are the differences?
3. Divide students into six small groups. Assign each group one of the topics below. Each group will read the assigned candidate’s health care proposal. (See the Suggested Research Links for candidate Web sites). One group will research the positives of the proposal (i.e. what current problems with the health care system does this proposal address?) and the other group will research the potential drawbacks or pitfalls of the proposal. Then, each group will design a political commercial either supporting or denouncing their assigned candidate’s plan. The

group can either draw a storyboard of the commercial or act out a skit of the commercial.

***Example:** Barack Obama proposes that all employers be required to offer health insurance or contribute to a public health program. This proposal ensures that all workers will have access to health insurance, but it has the potential to overburden small businesses. A political commercial for the proposal might focus on a single mother explaining that she was never offered health insurance before, but with the new plan she can finally take her children to the doctor. A political commercial against the proposal might focus on a small business owner discussing the drawbacks of the new proposal.*

Group One – Hillary Clinton - Positives

Group Two – Hillary Clinton – Potential Pitfalls

Group Three John McCain – Positives

Group Four – John McCain – Potential Pitfalls

Group Five – Barack Obama – Positives

Group Six – Barack Obama – Potential Pitfalls

4. After all groups have presented their commercials, ask students to compare the proposals. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Based on other lessons the students have completed, what topics do they think are missing from the proposals? What proposals do students think will be the most successful and why?

Lesson Six: Student Debate

The Resolution: Health care is a fundamental right; the government has an obligation to secure this right for all Americans.

Time: 1 class period for research; 1 class period for debate

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Understand opposing views of the health care debate
2. Explain and defend their views about health care

Materials:

- [Miller Center of Public Affairs: Health Care Resources](#)
- Resource guide and suggested links
- [PBS Online NewsHour Health Beat: In-Depth Coverage of the Uninsured](#)
- Internet Access
- [IDEA – International Debate Education Association](#)
- Student Debate Guide

Procedure:

There are many options for classroom debate – use the IDEA link for additional debate formats and suggestions.

1. Divide the students into two groups. One group will be in favor of the resolution and one group will be against the resolution. Students may choose which side they would like to debate, or the teacher may assign debate roles. Alternatively, large classes may be divided into smaller groups to debate the following resolutions:
 - Health care is a fundamental right.
 - The government has an obligation to secure health care for all Americans.
 - America should have a single-payer universal health insurance system.
2. Distribute the student debate guide and review the procedure and rules of debate. All group members should participate in research for the debate using the resource guide, Miller Center materials, and PBS Online NewsHour materials. Instruct students to anticipate possible critiques of their perspective so that they will more completely explain and defend their views during the debate. Students should support their statements with facts and research whenever possible. Students may use visual aids and graphs to strengthen their argument.
3. The teacher may declare a formal timed debate or an informal roundtable discussion depending on time and teacher preference.
4. After the debate, give students time to share points they found especially persuasive, arguments they found to be particularly strong, areas they still have

questions about, insights they had during the debate, and ideas or proposals for actions they can take to promote community health and health care reform.

Alternative:

Role-Playing Debate: Assign students to debate the resolution from a variety of perspectives, such as a pharmaceutical lobbyist, a physician, a hospital CEO, a free clinic worker, an undocumented worker, a minimum wage worker, an elderly person, a veteran, a student with a pre-existing condition, a business executive, a family with several children, a Democratic senator, a Republican senator, a World Health Organization spokesperson, a person with a chronic condition, or a small business owner. Give students time to research the resolution from their assigned perspective.

Student Debate Guide

Directions:

Complete the following handout which will serve as a reference during the class debate.

The Resolution: (Write the resolution you are debating)

Debate Preparation

1. List the main arguments that support and negate the resolution. Write a brief description of each argument.
2. List facts, statistics, sources consulted, and links to visual aids that support your argument.
3. Find a personal story or anecdote you can use to support your argument.
4. List potential rebuttals for each of your main points. Write a response, with supporting sources, for each of the rebuttals.
5. Summarize your main points for your closing arguments.
6. Record your unique suggestions, insights, and proposals.

Suggested Research Links

Articles and Studies

The Milken Institute

“An Unhealthy America: The Economic Burden of Chronic Disease - Charting a New Course to Save Lives and Increase Productivity and Economic Growth.” October 2007.
http://www.milkeninstitute.org/pdf/chronic_disease_report.pdf

Grantmakers in Health

“Healthy Behaviors: Addressing Chronic Disease at its Roots.” February 2004.
http://www.gih.org/usr_doc/Healthy_Behaviors_Issue_Brief.pdf

Health care ‘08

Health related election news, analysis and events, including a side by side comparison of presidential candidates’ health care reform proposals.
www.health08.org

Yes! Magazine

“Health Care For All” – A detailed look at grassroots and community ideas for health care reform. Fall 2006
<http://www.yesmagazine.org/default.asp?ID=189>

Organizations

American Medical Student Association

Educational resources with statistics, primers on different health care systems, action kits, and updates on developments in different states and Congress.
www.amsa.org/uhc

Citizens Health Care

People sharing their own stories about their experiences with health care.
www.citizenshealthcare.gov

Communities in Charge

Communities sharing their ideas for initiating and financing health care reform.
www.communitiesincharge.org

Kaiser Family Foundation

A wealth of resources, including state health facts, global health facts, studies, and health related articles in an easy to navigate format.
www.kff.org

National Institute for Health Care Management

This foundation conducts research and publishes studies and educational materials about a range of health care issues.
www.nihcm.org

National Institute of Health

Medical research and health news

www.nih.gov

San Francisco Department of Public Health

An overview of San Francisco's universal health access policies and disease prevention strategies.

<http://www.sfdph.org/dph/default.asp>

State Coverage

Detailed information about health care initiatives by state.

www.statecoverage.net

World Health Organization

Studies, statistics, country reports, and overviews of worldwide public health initiatives

www.who.int/en/

PBS Resources**Children's Hospital**

Multi-disciplinary lessons that accompany six news episodes which cover a variety of health issues facing children

<http://www.pbs.org/opb/childrenshospital/classroom/>

Online NewsHour In-depth Coverage: The Uninsured in America

In-depth coverage and lesson plans about the growing problem of uninsured in America

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/health/uninsured/index.html

NOW – Medicare Reform

A detailed lesson plan and accompanying coverage on Medicare and Medicare reform efforts.

<http://www.pbs.org/now/classroom/medicare.html#sites>

Link to National Standards

Taken from: www.mcrel.org

Civics Standards

1. [Understands ideas about civic life, politics, and government](#)
2. [Understands the essential characteristics of limited and unlimited governments](#)
14. [Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life](#)
19. [Understands what is meant by "the public agenda," how it is set, and how it is influenced by public opinion and the media](#)
20. [Understands the roles of political parties, campaigns, elections, and associations and groups in American politics](#)
21. [Understands the formation and implementation of public policy](#)
25. [Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights](#)

26. [Understands issues regarding the proper scope and limits of rights and the relationships among personal, political, and economic rights](#)

Health Standards

1. [Knows the availability and effective use of health services, products, and information](#)
2. [Knows environmental and external factors that affect individual and community health](#)
6. [Understands essential concepts about nutrition and diet](#)
7. [Knows how to maintain and promote personal health](#)

Thinking and Reasoning Standards

1. [Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument](#)
2. [Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning](#)
3. [Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences](#)

***About the Author:** Rebecca Catron is a freelance writer, English teacher, and member of Amnesty International's National Steering Committee for Human Rights Education. Rebecca has published articles and co-authored several educational guides. Her most recent project is writing curriculum for [In Plain Sight: A Video Human Rights Education Program](#), a collaboration between WITNESS and Amnesty International. She resides in Sunnyvale, California.*