



National  
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## **NAPH Strongly Urges Congress to Pass Health Reform** *Comprehensive Health Reform is Within Reach after 40 Years of Failure*

Statement of Larry S. Gage  
President

National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems

It is time to enact national health reform. With the introduction of the House amendments to the Senate-passed bill, a realistic compromise has been put on the table. NAPH strongly urges the House and Senate to pass this historic legislation without further delay.

NAPH's members include 140 of America's most important safety net hospitals and health systems. Safety net hospitals (and other providers, such as community health centers) have long served as our "national health plan" by default. While Congress was failing time after time to act, NAPH members were responding to the ongoing increase in the numbers of uninsured and underinsured. But the resources of these essential providers have been sorely challenged by the current economic crisis. The fact that many safety net systems are near the breaking point has been dramatically illustrated in recent reports on network and cable news programs and in newspapers across the country. The "great recession" has substantially increased the need for safety net health services, while undermining the ability of many state and local governments to provide adequate funding to meet that need.

In the meantime, our entire health system has become more dysfunctional and unsustainable. Runaway insurance premiums and costs, growing disparities in the health status of vulnerable patient populations, and inadequate access to primary care for millions of vulnerable Americans – all of these factors are leading toward a systemic breakdown in many parts of the country.

The Senate bill, combined with the House amendments, will expand coverage for tens of millions of Americans, while bringing important reforms to many parts of our health system. While unmet needs and coverage gaps – and the need for a strong safety net – will remain, the legislation is a giant and essential step forward. It is the result of months and years of hard work and careful thinking, and

Congressional leadership is to be applauded for their substantial achievements in bringing us to this point.

NAPH, like many other stakeholders, would prefer that health reform be enacted with bipartisan support. Many elements of this legislation have enjoyed Republican as well as Democratic sponsorship in years past. But with or without bipartisan support, the Congress must now move ahead. The need is too great, and this opportunity may not present itself again for many years. Health reform is no longer just a matter of politics—it is a matter of equity, of fairness, of justice and of national morality.

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**About the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (NAPH)**

NAPH represents America's most important safety net hospitals and health systems. These facilities provide high-quality health services for all patients, including the uninsured and underinsured, regardless of ability to pay. In addition to functioning as the country's default national health insurance system, public hospitals provide many essential community-wide services, such as primary care, trauma care, and neonatal intensive care. Public hospitals also train many of America's doctors, nurses, and other health care providers.