



## ANA-PAC 2008 Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name:  
Congressman Dennis Kucinich

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*Please attach a brief biography and any relevant campaign material. For each question, please share your positions as well as your accomplishments.*

1. The American Nurses Association holds a fundamental belief that health care is a basic human right and supports restructuring health care in order to provide access to affordable essential health care services to all residents of the United States, regardless of pre-existing conditions. ANA further believes that health care services should be reorganized to concentrate on community-based primary care and preventive care while also focusing on better control of rising health care costs. How do you plan to address the issue of providing adequate health care coverage for the uninsured and underinsured?

**The underlying problem is that we treat health care like a market commodity instead of a social service. Health care is targeted not to medical need, but to the ability to pay. Markets are good for many things, but they are not a good way to distribute health care.**

**Americans have the most expensive health care system in the world. We spend about twice as much per person as other developed nations, and that gap is growing. That's not because we are sicker or more demanding (Canadians, for example, see their doctors more often and spend more time in the hospital). And it's not because we get better results. By the usual measures of health (life expectancy, infant mortality, immunization rates), we do worse than most other developed countries. Furthermore, we are the only developed nation that does not provide comprehensive health care to all its citizens.**

**We must establish streamlined national health insurance, "Enhanced Medicare for Everyone." It would be publicly financed health care, privately delivered, and will put patients and doctors back in control of the system. Coverage will be more complete than private insurance plans; encourage prevention; and include prescription drugs, dental care, mental health care, and alternative and complementary medicine.**

**Dennis Kucinich also introduced Conyers-Kucinich National Health Insurance Bill H.R. 676. Backed by over 14,000 doctors, this is the future of American medicine.**

- a) Describe what benefits and services you believe should be included in basic health care coverage.

**Under a Kucinich Administration, all health care is basic care. Primary care, dental, mental, long term health care, and everything in between.**



- b) Describe the mechanism you believe would best finance such coverage.

**Under a single payer Not For Profit system, all the hospitals and Dr's offices will still be privately owned, however, instead of obtaining money through HMOs, the money will come from the government. Health care is a human right, not a privilege, and this is why Dennis Kucinich as President will implement a single-payer Health care system. HMOs work by taking money from everyone in their network and distributing it out as necessary. They work by grouping the healthy in with the sick, so that everyone ends up paying into the system and it gets desributed out based on need. The single payer system works under the same principle, however because the pool is so much larger, everyone ends up paying less.**

**Also without payroll being dedicated to time spent dealing with HMOs some waste is eliminated. By eliminating HMOs we throw back into the system the finances that were dedicated to paying for them. On May 1, 2006 Paul Krugman explained in Death by Insurance how incredibly wasteful the current system is. The doctor he referenced has two full-time staff members for billing, and two secretaries spend half their time collecting insurance information on the 301 different private plans they deal with. This type of waste is easily 20%.**

- c) What is your position on coverage of mental health services?

**Science has proven that there is a link between mental and physical systems. Mental health care is very important to the health of individuals and the health of society. Under the Universal health care system that has been proposed by Dennis Kucinich metal health will be covered. Drug and Alcohol addictions would also be covered as well, as well as alternative medicines.**

2. What policy initiatives would you propose to ensure that Americans receive safe, cost-effective, comprehensive, quality comprehensive health care services?

**A single payer universal health care plan that will cover every person in America, and is paid for once, out of taxes, and HMOs are completely eliminated, while keeping offices and hospitals privately owned. Practitioners heal people, not HMOs. By reallocating the money that would be going to HMOs and redirecting it back into the health care system, the American people can be Universally covered, just like every other industrialized country in the world.**

**Americans are already paying for a Universal Health Care system, but we are not receiving it. This system would not only pay for itself, but end up costing less in the long run. The time of American's paying leaps and bounds more then the rest of the industrialized nations needs to end.**



- a) What is your position \_\_\_\_\_ on legislation or regulations that would require health care facilities to develop and implement systems that ensure appropriate and safe registered nurse staffing levels?

**Congressman Dennis Kucinich supports legislation that would ensure appropriate and safe nurse staffing levels. H.R. 2123: Nurse Staffing Standards for Patient Safety and Quality Care Act of 2007 was co sponsored by Dennis Kucinich. This legislation is designed to require hospitals to have adequate levels of staffing for care. It is very important that incentives are given to nurses to ensure quality care and fair compensation for the work they do.**

3. How would you seek to address the severe nursing shortage facing this country?

**The problems with nursing shortages are several fold. Part of the root cause that Congressman Dennis Kucinich is working towards fixing is implementing stronger enforcement of antitrust laws to combat the the rising cost on hospitals to supply drugs instead of being able to employ nurses.**

**The study that Congressman Kucinich has released shows that rising drug prices and mergers in the pharmaceutical industry aggravate nursing shortages.**

**The top 20 drug firms accounted for almost 60 percent of mergers and acquisitions. In any industry, this is a red flag to consumers. Drug prices are expected to go up nearly 18 percent this year, and the prices of most commonly used drugs are growing at twice the rate of inflation. Drug company mergers are therefore associated with rising prices.**

**This study finds escalating drug prices - not the reductions in Medicare reimbursement rates as many contend - are the primary reason for lower revenues and profits for many hospitals and managed care plans. Hospitals and health plans have, in turn, encouraged cost cutting in the form of staffing cuts and service reductions**

**Now, as hospitals are in great need of resources to hire more staff, drug prices are squeezing hospital budgets to the extent that hospitals may actually fire the staff they currently have. This study shows that pharmaceutical mergers are creating a few powerful players in the industry, and are having a catastrophic effect on the health care system.**

**Congressman Kucinich plans to ask for hearings on this issue and work toward stronger enforcement of antitrust laws.**



- a) What is your position on measures that address working conditions for registered nurses and the safety of their patients, such as legislation prohibiting the use of mandatory overtime as a staffing tool, and “whistleblower protections” that would support nurses’ right to speak without reprisal about activities, practices, or conditions that threaten the health and safety of their patients or the environment?

**The right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike, the right to decent wages & benefits, the right to a safe workplace, the right to a secure retirement, the right to participate in a political process are all essential to the workers of the world, and these rights should be afforded to everyone. Dennis Kucinich is the working people's president**

**Incentives also need to be offered to keep nurses in their fields, with full worker's rights that everyone has the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike, the right to decent wages & benefits, the right to a safe workplace, the right to a secure retirement, and the right to participate in a political process.**

- b) What measures would you support to encourage more people to enter and stay in the field of nursing? What level of federal funding would you provide for Title VIII programs and the Nurse Reinvestment Act to ensure sufficient numbers of qualified nurses are available to provide a full range of nursing services in all geographic areas?

**Dennis Kucinich has co sponsored the Nurse Reinvestment Act, and is dedicated to making health care and qualified nurses available to everyone who needs and wants them. This is one of Dennis Kucinich's biggest priorities under a program of universal health care.**

4. Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) play a crucial role in providing health care services in our nation’s most underserved areas. These nurses typically hold degrees at the highest levels of education and receive advanced training in specialty areas of practice (i.e. Nurse Practitioners, Certified Nurse Midwives, and Clinical Nurse Specialists, among others). Despite the resolution of many practice and reimbursement issues, APRNs still experience discrimination and barriers to practice in our health care system. What is your position on the full utilization of APRNs?

**APRNs are very important to health care, and would be better funded under a Kucinich administration. The care that they provide is also very important to the health care world. Nurses care for patients as a whole, where as Doctors care for the diseases. Both are very important and need to be properly utilized.**



- a) Given that APRNs typically serve underserved communities, what is your position regarding APRNs as primary care providers in community settings?

**Because of the training that they receive to care for patients Dennis Kucinich believes that APRNs should have the ability to become primary care providers in community settings.**

5. On-the-job injuries caused by the strain of lifting and repositioning patients cause 12% of nurses to leave the profession annually. The average nurse working an 8 hour shift is currently required to lift 1.8 tons. If elected, how would you require health care facilities to invest in safe patient lifting technology to reduce the risk of workplace injuries to nurses?

**Dennis Kucinich is also a huge proponent of worker's rights, and has worked to ensure proper coverage and investment into technologies that will advance and ease the turnover and increase the quality of care in hospitals.**

6. The Centers for Disease Control has confirmed the presence of hundreds of potentially harmful chemicals in the blood, urine, and breast milk of the U.S. population. Even more, toxic chemicals have also been detected in umbilical cord blood, indicating the ability of these chemicals to cross the placenta and reach the fetus. The incidence of diseases thought to have an environmental component are on the rise: Asthma prevalence has doubled in ten years; autism has increased more than tenfold; 1 in 6 children are born with a developmental disability; and a woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer is now 1 in 7. What is your plan to create a healthy environment in order to reduce the rates of environmental causes of illness?

**The environment we live in effects chemicals present in our systems. By cleaning up the air and water we can effect the health of the people who live in the area. Recent studies show that, on average, people have more than 30 toxic chemicals in their bodies. Of the 2,000 chemicals commonly found in public drinking water supplies, the Environmental Protection Agency tests for only 83. By taking care of the environment Americans will also be able to take care of their bodies, as fewer chemicals will be in our drinking water, and in the air we breathe. Dennis Kucinich is very dedicated to cleaning up the environment, and particularly into money into non polluting forms of energy, such as solar and wind power.**



**Return to:**

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