

National Patient Advocate Foundation

Congressional Candidates Survey on Health Care

Candidate: U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire
District: Pennsylvania – 4th Congressional District
Campaign Address: Citizens for Altmire
P.O. Box 1776
Freedom, PA 15042
Phone: (412) 404-6182
Fax: (412) 450-1584
Email: info@jasonaltmire.com
Website: www.jasonaltmire.com

** Note: The answers Congressman Altmire selected are in bold faced type.

1. Today, over 47 million Americans are uninsured and 25 million are underinsured. To many Americans having health insurance doesn't necessarily mean their medical needs will be covered, and for those without health insurance, access to health care services is often unattainable. NPAF support a national, bi-partisan approach to achieve universal access to health care which is affordable, high quality, fair and equitable, and portable.

Do you agree or disagree?

I agree. As co-chair of the New Democratic Coalition's Health Care Caucus, I am working to bring everyone to the table so that we can forge bipartisan, common sense solutions that will help us achieve the goal of universal health care. Some of the policies I advocate for that can help us achieve this goal include strengthening Medicare beyond 2019, expanding SCHIP to cover 10 million children, and making health insurance more affordable for small businesses. I also want to reduce health care costs by incentivizing preventative care, improving disease management and expanding the use of health IT.

2. Health insurance requirements vary by state, creating a patchwork health care system. Some argue for a streamlined national guideline for what must be included in a health insurance plan; others say that only the states should regulate what is in a health plan; and others argue that there should be no minimum requirements for what is covered in a health plan.

Favor a national minimum benefit guideline for health insurance

Favor state benefit guidelines for health insurance

Do not favor minimum benefit guidelines

3. Approximately 160 million Americans obtain their health insurance through their employers and employees are not taxed for this benefit. A number of health care reform proposals would limit or eliminate the employer-based health system, and change the tax treatment of health care. Which of the following general health care reform proposals do you support?

Maintain and strengthen the current employer-based system for health care

Maintain employees' current tax exclusion of health benefits

Phase-out the employer based health system

Phase-out the current worker exclusion from taxable income of health benefits

Other

4. In our current system, most health plans are regulated at the federal level, with a smaller percentage regulated by individual states. Some argue this regulatory framework complicates our patchwork health care system. In your opinion, the regulation of health insurance should primarily be the responsibility of:

- a. Federal Government
- b. State and local government
- c. **Both federal and state governments**
- d. Other

5. Numerous health care reform plans have been proposed by elected officials, organizations and individuals. Which, if any, of the following proposals do you support?

- a. Maintaining our current system where most health care is managed in the private sector, is responsive to individual need and personal responsibility
- b. Creating a single-payer health care system primarily run by the government
- c. **Allowing everyone to participate in a system of private insurance (modeled on the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program)**
- d. **Requiring insurers to cover people without regard to pre-existing conditions**
- e. **Helping high cost patients by establishing a Catastrophic Health Insurance Program**
- f. **Other? Incentivizing improved disease management and preventative care so we can improve quality of care and prevent costly chronic diseases**

6. Several health care reform proposals include altering or eliminating the existing Medicare and state children's health insurance programs. Do you favor phasing-out Medicare and state children's health programs and replacing them with a system of guaranteed private insurance, with subsidies for those unable to maintain health coverage on their own?

Favor

Oppose

7. Government's health care spending could exceed one-third of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the U.S. by 2050 if current trends continue. As patients, payers and providers face escalating costs, it is clear that health care reform must address the critical issue of cost. Which of the following would you support the help control health care costs?

- a. **Widespread use of evidence based medicine**
- b. **Prescription drug reimportation**
- c. Consumer-driver health plans (HSAs/ high deductible plans) to increase competition
- d. **Health information technology including e-prescribing**
- e. **Use of generic drugs and biologics**
- f. **Empowering federal or state government to negotiate the high cost of drugs**
- g. Other

8. An increasing number of Americans find themselves in medical debt crisis due to mounting premiums, co-pays, deductibles and annual and lifetime caps on coverage; and research suggests that between 25-50 percent of bankruptcies are related to medical debt. To help those with sever medical debt, which would you favor?

- a. Limiting credit card interest rates for medical expenses/ debt
- b. **Protecting those with terminal illnesses from predatory collection practices**
- c. Limiting what hospitals can charge uninsured patients
- d. **Reforming our bankruptcy laws**
- e. Other

9. Cancer is one of the most expensive diseases with treatments often exceeding as much as \$100,000 a year. Cancer patients are increasingly overburdened with cost-sharing requirements that place them in serious financial debt. Would you support capping out-of-pocket spending for cancer patients at a pre-determined level (example: 15% of annual income?)

Yes
 No

I believe we should look into ways to reduce the financial burden many cancer patients face.

10. By 2006, approximately 22.5 million seniors had enrolled in the new prescription drug benefit under Medicare. However, the plan includes a gap in coverage often referred to as the "donut hole." Most seniors receive no coverage for their prescription drugs once they reach the "donut hole" and struggle to pay high

prescription drug costs. Do you support any of the following reforms to help fix the “donut hole”?

- a. Enacting a small federal tax increase
- b. Driving down Medicare costs through the expanded use of generic drugs**
- c. Charging higher income seniors more for Part D coverage
- d. Allowing Medicare for negotiate the price of drugs**
- e. Removing the current cap on Social Security payroll taxes
- f. Other