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Nation mustn't ignore health and health care any longer

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Health care is in the air. President Bush joined the chorus in his State of the Union. His plan is the most perverse of the recent proposals, calling for "incentives" for people to buy insurance while taxing the middle class because its problem, Bush implies, is that the middle class has too much insurance. Poor people don't need "incentives" to get insurance, they need to be able to afford it!

Meanwhile the governors of many states are calling for complicated universal coverage plans, most of which are based on Massachusetts' plan of "mandated health insurance." Unfortunately, Massachusetts is already having serious problems figuring out how its plan will truly be affordable. The plan put forward by Gov. Mitch Daniels here in Indiana cannot be considered a universal plan, since it hopes to only cover about 100,000 of the state's 870,000 uninsured.

If we do agree as a nation that we can no longer tolerate 46 million Americans without health insurance, there is a simpler and more affordable way to achieve universal health care. It's based on the experience we already have. We have had a pilot program of government-sponsored health care for 40 years. It's called Medicare. We should simply expand it to cover everyone.

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