

# Open access to health care for all

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In Wisconsin and across the country, lack of health care coverage is resulting in unnecessary deaths.

Those who are uninsured often go without screenings and preventative care and often delay or forego needed medical care. The uninsured are less likely to have a usual source of care outside of the emergency room, and uninsured Americans are sicker and die earlier than those who have insurance.

Roughly 22,000 people between the ages of 25 and 64 died in 2006 because they did not have health insurance, according to a 2008 study. Across the United States, twice as many people died from a lack of health insurance as died from homicide, a separate 2008 study shows.

We cannot turn our backs on hardworking Wisconsin residents who cannot afford health care or who do not have access to basic coverage. Between 2000 and 2006, an estimated 1,600 Wisconsin residents between the ages of 25 and 64 died because they lacked health insurance. Nearly five working-age Wisconsinites die each week due to lack of health insurance.

Health care coverage is too important to leave to chance. Wisconsin health insurance rates have increased 30 percent faster than the national average. While national employer-based health insurance premiums have increased by 119 percent this decade, they have increased 149 percent in Wisconsin.

Mercer Health & Benefits LLC found that Wisconsin health insurance costs were 23 percent above the national average in November 2007 (\$1,868 more per employee).

In looking forward to single-payer health care reform, the WEAC Board has adopted a principal that **health care coverage in Wisconsin must not be denied based on age, health status, occupation or pre-existing conditions.**

This could mean life or death for those who are uninsured or underinsured. Close to a half-million Wisconsinites, or 9 percent of Wisconsin's total population, was uninsured from 2006 to 2007. Additionally, 11 percent of adults ages 19 to 64 in Wisconsin were uninsured in the same time period and 10 percent of Wisconsinites younger than 64 also were uninsured.

To get involved in the informational campaign regarding health care, e-mail [healthcare@weac.org](mailto:healthcare@weac.org) for e-alerts and share your story by sending it to [shareyourstory@weac.org](mailto:shareyourstory@weac.org).

For more information about health care reform, visit [www.weac.org/healthcare](http://www.weac.org/healthcare).