

An Open Letter to the Honorable Barack H. Obama,
President of the United States of America

Stimulate Change

Mr. President,

As a leading consortium of major American employers, we applaud your vision to reform health care with advancements in information technology through the economic recovery funding. We believe it is of critical importance that the American consumer is at the center of any effort so it is our request that, along with equipping doctors, you should place a high priority on investment necessary to connect consumers with their personal health information directly – to make every citizen a true stakeholder in our shared responsibility and mutual interest to manage the health and wellness of the nation.

As a group, we represent eight of America's largest employers providing access to health care for over five million people. Both we and our employees bear the brunt of a dysfunctional system that impairs our nation's global competitiveness and provides comparatively poor value-for-money. It is our view that real change can only happen if the American healthcare consumer is empowered through access to their own information.

Government and private enterprise can work together to realize this vision, but we need your help.

Dossia is an employer-led initiative dedicated to improving US health and health care. We believe that empowering every citizen with private and secure access to their own personal health information will enable them to take charge and to take personal responsibility – to make healthier choices and lend their voices to reform of our defective health care system.

Our approach is entirely focused on connecting the health care consumer to their data directly for several key reasons:

1. Patient control and ownership of their health data will facilitate competition - keeping this information in the control of doctors and insurers will only have the opposite effect.
2. Better informed patients make better decisions about their care, and make more efficient use of scarce health care resources – most health care consumers today do not have easy access to vital information that would aid their decision-making.
3. Real change can only come about when every American healthcare consumer has the power and ability to participate as a true stakeholder in their own health.
4. Personal health record systems represent a critical component to achieving a quicker, simpler and more efficient path to a health record for every American.

We invite you and your administration to join us in a dialogue to discuss how we can work together to empower the American healthcare consumer. Americans deserve a healthcare system that is responsive, efficient, and of high quality. We believe the key to achieving these objectives is through the power of the individual as a key contributor to their own wellness.

As you provide investment for improvements in the information infrastructure of healthcare, now is the time to demand changes to care delivery and information transparency. Please help us realize this goal as we do our part to renew America's promise.

Sincerely,

Colin Evans, President CEO, Dossia Consortium

The Board of Directors of Dossia:

Craig R. Barrett, Chairman, Intel Corporation
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A dysfunctional health care system

Total healthcare costs fall on US industry through direct payment for our employees' healthcare and through taxes to pay for everyone else's and through the costs of uncompensated care for the uninsured.

As costs have risen dramatically, fewer employers can afford to provide healthcare, and fewer employees can afford to take healthcare offered, resulting in the swelling ranks of the uninsured or the disappearance of jobs overseas. In a global economy, healthcare inefficiency is penalizing the US by draining resources away from US innovation, investment, and jobs.

The US healthcare sector should take steps to deliver better value like every one of our companies and every industry in the US has done to compete globally.

The healthcare sector consumes 16% of US GDP – the OECD average is 9% and no other developed nation spends more than 11% but this higher spending is not delivering higher quality of care; just the opposite. The Commonwealth Fund scorecard gives the US system a failing grade compared with other developed economies – measuring significant shortfalls in efficiency, access, and quality of care.

National healthcare spending increases

(1) <http://www.nchc.org/facts/cost.shtml>

In 2008, health care spending in the United States reached \$2.4 trillion, and was projected to reach \$3.1 trillion in 2012.¹ Health care spending is projected to reach \$4.3 trillion by 2016.

The annual premium that a health insurer charges an employer for a health plan covering a family of four averaged \$12,700 in 2008. Workers contributed nearly \$3,400, or 12 percent more than they did in 2007.² The annual premiums for family coverage significantly eclipsed the gross earnings for a full-time, minimum-wage worker (\$10,712).

Workers are now paying \$1,600 more in premiums annually for family coverage than they did in 1999 and, since 1999, employment-based health insurance premiums have increased 120 percent, compared to cumulative inflation of 44 percent and cumulative wage growth of 29 percent during the same period and premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance in the United States have been rising four times faster on average than workers' earnings.

The National Coalition on Health Care

US healthcare costs exceed those of other developed countries

(2) http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL34175_20070917.pdf

The United States spends more money on health care than any other country in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The OECD consists of 30 democracies, most of which are considered the most economically advanced countries in the world. According to OECD data, the United States spent \$6,102 per capita on health care in 2004 — more than double the OECD average and 19.9% more than Luxembourg, the second-highest spending country. In 2004, 15.3% of the U.S. economy was devoted to health care, compared with 8.9% in the average OECD country and 11.6% in second-placed Switzerland.

U.S. Health Care Spending: Comparison with OECD – Congressional Research Service – 9/07

US healthcare quality is lower than other developed countries

(3) http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=401577

Once upon a time, it was taken as an article of faith among most Americans that the U.S. health care system was simply the best in the world. Yet growing evidence indicates the system falls short given the high level of resources committed to health care. ... Quality of care is highly variable and delivered by a system that is too often poorly coordinated, driving up costs, and putting patients at risk. With rising costs straining family, business, and public budgets, access deteriorating and variable quality, improving health care performance is a matter of national urgency.

Why Not the Best? Results from a National Scorecard on U.S. Health System Performance - September 2006