

Healthcare IT News

Presidential hopeful Edwards calls for universal health coverage

By [Diana Manos, Senior Editor](#) | 09/25/07 |

Washington – Presidential hopeful and former Senator John Edwards (D-N.C.) said yesterday that mandated universal healthcare is the one issue he will not bend on when it comes to his healthcare platform.

At a briefing sponsored by the Federation of American Hospitals and Families USA, Edwards said healthcare is a top priority for him and noted he was one of the first candidates to develop a plan for healthcare reform.

Edwards said mandated universal coverage is the only way to ensure that most Americans will be covered. This could be paid for by eliminating tax cuts on the wealthy, using new technologies such as electronic medical records to improve care and reduce errors, and having one provider take medical responsibility for a patient's care.

As to how coverage should be provided, he wants to leave that up to the American people, allowing them to choose between private and federal-run plans.

Edwards argued his plan is not, as his opponents would call "a back door method to a single payer" but rather an opportunity for Americans to choose the direction of U.S. healthcare reform. This, he said, is preferable over decisions made in "policy shops," removed from the real world.

Edwards said his plan would also allow Americans to retain the coverage they have now and would allow them to take their coverage to any geographic location and from job to job.

The price tag on his plan is \$90 to \$120 billion, to be paid for in part by rolling back Bush Administration tax cuts to individuals who make \$200,000 or more a year, Edwards said.

Other methods for footing the bill would include what he called creative ways to bring down prescription drug costs, including federal negotiations for drug prices, importing drugs from Canada and putting constitutional limits on how drug companies can advertise.

Edwards said he would not look for tax increases on the middle class.

Edwards added that his plan would address HIV/AIDS, which killed 17,000 Americans last year and 3 million globally. Within the U.S. , Edwards proposes increases in age appropriate sex education, Medicaid coverage for treatment, safe needle exchange, and more speedy approval for new treatments through the World Health Organization.

America should lead the effort to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS with a commitment of \$15 billion over 5 years, he said.