

Health Care Reform

IUPUI expert looks at debate of health care reform

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Transcript

[President Barack Obama] We are not a nation that accepts nearly 46 million uninsured men, women, and children. We are not a nation that lets hard-working families go without coverage, or turns its back on those in need. We're a nation that cares for its citizens. We look out for one another. That's what makes us the United States of America. We need to get this done.

[E. Wright] We're about three months into the national debate about health reform, and President Obama has outlined a series of principles we need to consider as we talk about the different options for reforming our health care system. I think what's interesting about President Obama's position is in fact that he sees health care reform as really critical to our economic development and recovery.

I think what's really profound, actually, is the consensus that we need to do something. When we first started talking about health reform in '92 and '93 under President Clinton, there wasn't a wide agreement that we needed to do something. I think actually that now we've come to pretty much a consensus that something actually has to change. Now it's sort of a question over quibbling over the details on how do we change it, and what do we change and why are we changing different parts of the system.

We know that in fact one of the reasons health care costs are so high is that providers often have to compensate for those who don't have health insurance. So in fact, one of the major drivers is the number of uninsured. So there's something consensus that we need to do something--if we do something on the coverage side, it'll actually affect the cost side to some extent.

On the one hand you have a public who, generally when you ask them, are pretty well satisfied with their own health care. The like their doctors, they don't see any real reason to change their personal situation when it comes to health care. It's this quandary, because on the one hand they recognize that the system is also broken; it's costing too much, but they like what they're getting, so there's this quandary. Change the system, but don't affect what's going on with my health care.

It's hard to characterize how Hoosiers feel about health care reform. I think there's a general consensus that the system isn't working as well as it needs to work. The problem is that not everybody agrees on how we should solve it. There's some debate about whether we should go to a national, single payer kind of system, versus those who are more concerned about covering everybody, using more of a patchwork model, insurance coverage, sort of expanding Medicaid or Medicare. Some people are more concerned about the quality issues, some people are really concerned about making sure their relationship with their doctor improves over time, more so than it has been able to do in our current system.