

REFORM NOW?

As the quotes below show, health care reform has been a long time coming. U.S. presidents going back to Harry S. Truman have stated the national urgency of creating a health care system that is available and affordable to everyone. Unfortunately, during these six-plus decades, our problems in health care have only grown worse. Millions in our society still lack access to quality health care as we await meaningful health care reform.

As Sr. Carol Keehan, DC, writes in the lead article of this special section of *Health Progress* ("Yes! The Time is *Now*," p. 18), we find ourselves in a promising moment. A fast-growing number of Americans, political leaders and advocacy groups agree: The need to reform the U.S. health care system is urgent.

While the current environment is exciting and hopeful, it involves many difficult issues. The editorial team at *Health Progress* assembled this edition to examine and explain some of those: the principles the Catholic Health Association will stand by regardless of how things move forward, the fears that block the way,

1945



"We should resolve now that the health of the nation is a national concern; that financial barriers in the way of attaining health shall be removed; that the health of all its citizens deserves the help of all the nation."

—PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN

1954



"The means for achieving good health should be accessible to all. A person's location, occupation, age, race, creed or financial status should not bar him from enjoying this success."

—PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

1961



"It is to the unfinished business of health — which affects every person and home and community in this land — that we must now direct our best efforts."

—PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

1976



"The burden of catastrophic illness can be borne by very few in our society. We must eliminate this fear from every family."

—PRESIDENT GERALD FORD

1979



"It has been 30 years since President Truman challenged Congress to secure for all Americans access to quality health care as a matter of right. It has been nearly 15 years since Congress, responding to the leadership of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, finally enacted Medicare and Medicaid. Now, after a decade and a half of inaction, it is time to move forward once again."

—PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER

REFORM HOW?

the models we might look to, the relationship between market forces and Catholic values, the coverage and delivery system matters that need attention, some of the choices that will have to be made, and finally, why Catholic health care will remain a vital ministry when a person's ability to pay is no longer a primary issue. The perspectives of the diverse group of experts represented in the following pages will help each of us sort through the complexities that demand our time, intelligence, creativity, energy and persistence.

The CHA is grateful to the writers who contributed their time and talent to this issue of *Health Progress*, and to all of the journal's readers for the work they do every day to deliver quality, compassionate health care. Health care reform is more than a possibility now, and it will take the collective voice of all in the ministry to make sure it stays that way.

—Jeff Tieman, CHA Senior Director Health Reform Initiatives

1983



"The need for action now is clear. Health care costs are climbing so fast [that] they may soon threaten the quality of care and access to care which Americans enjoy."

—PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

1992



"We must reform our health care system. For

this, too, bears on whether or not we can compete in the world. ... We must bring costs under control, preserve quality, preserve choice, and reduce the people's nagging daily worry about health insurance."

—PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH

1993



"Let us write a new chapter in America's

story, and guarantee every American comprehensive health benefits that can never be taken away. Some people have said it would be a miracle if we passed health care reform. But, my fellow Americans, I believe we live in a time of great change when miracles do happen."

—PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON

2002



"All reform should be guided by the same goals.

The first goal: all Americans should be able to choose a health care plan that meets their needs at affordable prices. ... Many of the poor and uninsured, including legal immigrants, are outside our system of health care entirely."

—PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

2007



"When it comes to health care, we have

talked and we have tinkered and let this crisis fester for decades. ... Every American has the right to affordable health care. We now face an opportunity and an obligation to turn the page on the failed politics of yesterday's health care debate. It's time to bring together businesses, the medical community and members of both parties around a comprehensive solution to this crisis."

—PRESIDENT-ELECT BARACK OBAMA