



# Reform Matters

Making Real Progress for Women and Health Care

November 2008

Dear Advocate:

Each day, our current health care system fails to meet the needs of far too many women, especially low-income women and women of color. Comprehensive reform that addresses the many challenges of our health care system—and that guarantees accessible, affordable, quality health care for all—will positively impact women's health, work, and financial well-being. With a new federal administration and Congress, and with a growing number of states starting to debate this issue, women have never had more at stake.

The *Reform Matters Toolkit* provides women's advocates with the resources they need to be full participants in the fight for health care reform that meets the unique needs of women and their families. This toolkit provides an overview of the distinct challenges women face in our current health care system, analyzes the impact that various national and state health reform proposals would have on women's access to health care, and presents options for how to promote high-quality affordable health care for all.

Public opinion polls consistently show that the majority of Americans, and women in particular, believe that addressing our health care crisis should be one of the nation's top priorities. We look forward to working with you to ensure that comprehensive health reform takes precedence for policymakers, so that all women and their families get the care they need to lead healthy lives. Together, we can—and will—succeed.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide technical assistance, or if you need additional information about any of the materials in the toolkit.

Sincerely,

Judy Waxman

Vice President, Health and Reproductive Rights  
National Women's Law Center

## About the Center

The National Women's Law Center is a Washington, D.C., nonprofit organization working to expand opportunities and eliminate barriers for women and their families, with a major emphasis on women's health and reproductive rights, education and employment opportunities, and family economic security.

## Authors

The *Reform Matters Toolkit* was a collaborative endeavor that relied upon the work of many individuals. Brigitte Courtot, Lisa Codispoti, and Judy Waxman were primary authors, along with Gretchen Borchelt for the "Reproductive Health Care and Health Reform" section; Adrienne Ammerman for the "Dos and Don'ts: Talking About Health Care Reform" section; Jen Swedish for the "Women and Employer-Sponsored Insurance" and "The Individual Insurance Market: A Hostile Environment for Women" sections; and Golda Philip for the "Bare-Bones Health Plans: Is Something Better Than Nothing?" section. These authors were greatly assisted by Marcia Greenberger, Joan Entmacher, Lisa M. LeMair, Julia Kaye, Ellen Newcomb, Sarah McGinnis, and Diana Santos.

The National Partnership for Women and Families authored the "Ensuring Quality Health Care in Health Reform" and "Health Information Technology: A Key Component of Health Reform" sections. The "Glossary of Terms" section was adapted from a health care glossary created by Families USA. Families USA also created the "Upper Public Program Eligibility Levels for Children and Adults" section. Celinda Lake of Lake Research Partners developed the "What Women Want: How to Talk to Women Voters about Health Care" section. Copyright for these materials is that of the respective authors.

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## Disclaimer

While text, citations, and data, are, to the best of the authors' knowledge, current as this report was prepared, there may well be subsequent developments, including recent legislative actions, that could alter the information provided herein. This report does not constitute legal advice; individuals and organizations considering legal action should consult with their own legal counsel before deciding on a course of action. In addition, this report does not constitute medical advice. Individuals with health problems should consult an appropriate health care provider.



# Reform Matters: Making Real Progress for Women and Health Care

## **NWLC has developed the tools and resources to make a difference!**

Addressing barriers to women's access to health care is more important than ever before. Health reform presents an opportunity to ensure that all women have access to affordable, high-quality comprehensive health care. Women's advocates must be active and vocal in this fight. Make a difference—get the most current and up-to-date information, tools, and resources from the National Women's Law Center (NWLC) and our *Reform Matters* project.

### ***Reform Matters Toolkit: What Advocates Need to Know***

The *Reform Matters Toolkit* provides resources to assist women's advocates to be full participants in the health care reform movement and policy debates at the state and national levels. Building on our long-standing work on women's health and health care coverage, this resource explores various health care reform proposals and their impact on women's access to comprehensive, affordable, quality care.

### ***Reform Matters Conference Call Series***

NWLC convenes monthly conversations among women's health care and reproductive rights advocates to focus on health care reform policy at the state and national levels, provide an on-going forum to learn from one another, and share experiences and questions that have come up in addressing various health care reform proposals. Calls take place the second Thursday of every month.

### ***Technical and Informational Assistance***

NWLC can provide your organization with technical assistance on the current policy debates taking place on the national and state levels. Our assistance can include: written analysis of policy proposals, researching and answering specific questions, drafting testimony, giving presentations, or hosting meetings.

### ***National Women and Health Care Coalition***

NWLC hosts a broad coalition of national organizations including reproductive rights advocates, women's advocates, women's health advocates, labor unions and health advocates, to respond to various federal, health-related issues as they impact women. The coalition gives members the opportunity to share educational materials, strategic analyses, and the latest developments both nationally and in the states.

### ***Health Care for America Now!***

NWLC has joined an unprecedented national effort on health reform—and we hope you'll join, too. Health Care for America Now is working toward a bold new solution that gives women, and all people, real choice and a guarantee of quality coverage they can afford: keeping their current private insurance plan, picking a new private insurance plan, or joining a public health insurance plan.

**To learn more about the *Reform Matters* project, visit our website [www.nwlc.org/reformmatters](http://www.nwlc.org/reformmatters), email the project team at [reformmatters@nwlc.org](mailto:reformmatters@nwlc.org), or call (202) 588-5180.**

## Receive Updates to Your Reform Matters Toolkit

### Receive updates for your *Reform Matters Toolkit*!

Make sure that you are armed with the most current policy knowledge of women's unique relationships with the health care system. Keep your copy of the *Reform Matters Toolkit* up-to-date so that you can fully participate in health care reform movements at the state and national levels. To receive updates for your toolkit:

Go to **<http://action.nwlc.org/reformmatterstoolkitupdates>** to complete a form with your contact information,

OR

Fill out the form below and fax it to the National Women's Law Center at **202-588-5185** (Attention: Thao Nguyen).

Please enter your contact information:

Name:	
Email:	
Street 1:	
Street 2:	
City / State / Zip:	
Phone Number:	
Organization / Company:	

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, please send me additional information and updates from National Women's Law Center!

To learn more about our *Reform Matters* project, visit [www.nwlc.org/reformmatters](http://www.nwlc.org/reformmatters), or contact the project team at [reformmatters@nwlc.org](mailto:reformmatters@nwlc.org) or 202-588-5180.

To learn more about the National Women's Law Center, visit [www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org).