

For Immediate Release

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June 22, 2009

## **Report: Health Care Costs Skyrocketing in Nebraska**

Study Shows Urgency of Support for President Obama's Health Care Plan as Nebraskans Head to Washington, D.C. for Rally, Historic Lobby Day

\*\*\* Read the Report Here:

<http://www.neappleseed.org/docs/Nebraska%20Affordability%20Report.pdf>

(Lincoln, Nebraska) - The skyrocketing cost of health insurance is increasingly putting health care out of reach of working families and businesses in Nebraska, according to a new report released today by Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest as a part of Health Care for America Now (HCAN) – the nation's largest health care campaign.

Health insurance premiums for Nebraska working families have gone up 69 percent between 2000 and 2007. In dollars, that means the cost of family health coverage in Nebraska has increased from \$6,760 to \$11,434, and workers in Nebraska are not making enough money to keep up. From 2000 to 2007, health insurance premiums rose 3.2 times faster than wages. In addition:

- The full cost of employer-sponsored insurance in Nebraska equals 22 percent of the median family income. Without meaningful health reform, that number will grow to 42 percent in 2016.
- The full cost of employer-sponsored health insurance in Nebraska is projected to grow at an annual rate of 7.9 percent, compared to a 1.2 percent annual increase in income.
- About 130,000 working non-elderly adults in Nebraska do not have health insurance. That comprises 71 percent of the total non-elderly uninsured population.
- For family health coverage in Nebraska, the average employer's portion of annual premiums rose 69 percent from 2000 to 2007 while the average worker's share grew by 69 percent.
- A recent report estimated that 62 percent of bankruptcies were directly related to medical bills; in Nebraska there were 6,447 non-business bankruptcies in 2008.

“These startling numbers show that health care reform cannot wait and that any reform must put people’s health care needs before health care industry profits,” said Jennifer Carter, Director of the Health Care Access Program at Nebraska Appleseed. “Nebraskans are worrying whether health care will be there for them when they need it most. Reform must include real choice and competition in the health care marketplace that will lower costs and keep insurance companies honest.”

Eleven Health Care for America Now members from Nebraska will be among the thousands of health care activists headed for Washington, D.C. this week for a rally and the largest health care lobby day ever, demanding quality, affordable health care for all in 2009. Emmy-award winning actress Edie Falco will tell her story, joining people from across the country whose experiences show the need for immediate reform.

Joining the delegation from Nebraska is Pastor Janet Banks. Pastor Banks was diagnosed with stage II breast cancer in November. Like most Americans, she and her husband have struggled to meet their premium and deductible payments in order to receive some type of care. Pastor Banks’ husband pays around \$400.00 a month for her premium while he goes uninsured because they cannot afford the premium for the both of them. Pastor Banks recognizes that this is the struggle facing most families in America.

“Whether you live in the city, suburbs or a rural area in this country, accessibility, affordability, accountability and demand for quality healthcare is the same. The time has come for a public healthcare insurance program that would provide the care that we all want and deserve,” said Pastor Banks. “Nebraskans want it and, the American People are long overdue in receiving it.”

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Nebraska Appleseed, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public interest law project, is a national leader in addressing social problems facing vulnerable children without loving and permanent homes, low-income families working hard to make ends meet, and new immigrants seeking a better life. Nebraska Appleseed’s current year action plan and description of its six program areas, significant litigation and policy reform successes, and broad-based accomplishments can be found at [neappleseed.org](http://neappleseed.org).

Nebraska Appleseed is a part of the Appleseed network of independent state-based public interest law centers working to identify and address social injustices. The Appleseed network seeks to build a just society through education, legal advocacy, community activism and policy expertise by addressing root causes and producing practical, systemic solutions with broad implication. For more information visit [appleseednetwork.org](http://appleseednetwork.org).

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