

## **MAJOR NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS COME TOGETHER TO MOBILIZE COMMUNITIES OF COLOR FOR FINAL PUSH ON HEALTH CARE REFORM**

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Washington, DC - The country's largest African-American and Latino organizations announced on Monday they are joining forces with other major national civil rights and grassroots groups to mobilize the nation's 100 million people of color for a final push in support of universal health care reform.

The organizations -- the NAACP National Voter Fund, the National Council of La Raza, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Campaign for Community Change, the United States Student Association and PowerPAC.org -- said they will work together to make certain that the voices of people of color are heard, and heeded, as the health care reform debate enters its final, critical days.

The groups released television and print ads in English and Spanish that will run initially in four states with sizable African-American and Latino populations -- Florida, North Carolina, Louisiana and Arkansas. The ads are part of a grassroots effort to ensure that members of Congress appreciate the importance of reform to the people of color they represent.

The ads can be viewed online starting on Oct. 5 at <http://www.healthequityforall.org>.

"If we had enacted real health care reform in the past decade, then we would have saved the lives of 880,000 African-Americans," said Benjamin Todd Jealous, attending the briefing in his role as board member of the NAACP National Voter Fund.

"The members of Congress in these states are out of touch with the voices of their constituents. Real people are going bankrupt, losing their homes and even dying for real health care reform in this country," said Jealous, who also serves as president and chief executive officer of the NAACP.

The latest U.S. Census estimates confirm that there are more than 100 million people of color in the country, 33 percent of the population. In several key states, the percentage of people of color is even greater, approaching 40 percent in Florida and Louisiana. These constituencies comprise the building blocks for a new majority that can reshape the policies and priorities of the country.

A newly released report by the group "Health Care for America Now!" finds that African Americans and Latinos are more likely to go without health care because they cannot afford it, are less than half as likely as whites to have a regular doctor and that people of color have the highest rates of being uninsured.

"The health care debate is an important one for all Americans but absolutely no one has more at stake than communities of color," said Janet Murguía, NCLR's president and chief executive officer. "We need health care reform that embodies the highest and best values of our nation."

The organizations called for a health system that:

Includes a public option to compete with private insurance companies. Covers all U.S. residents regardless of pre-existing condition or employment status. Is comprehensive and affordable for everyone. Ensures the highest quality of care for everyone.

"Our organizations have been working tirelessly on health care reform all along. Now that it's crunch time, our collective efforts are critical to making sure that the reforms that become law enable everyone, including communities of color, to have access to affordable, quality health care," said Wade Henderson, president and chief executive officer of LCCR.

Added CCC Executive Director Deepak Bhargava: "We believe health care is a basic human right, as essential as food and shelter. No one should have to go without health care because of a lack of income."

*The mission of the **NAACP National Voter Fund** is to engage in issue advocacy, educate voters on candidates' positions on civil rights, and increase voter turnout in the African-American community. It does this through voter education, non-partisan registration and get-out-the-vote efforts. For more information, go to: <http://www.naacpnvf.net/>*

***NCLR** – the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States – works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. For more information go to: <http://www.nclr.org>*

***LCCR** is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights coalition representing persons of color, women, children, labor unions, individuals with disabilities, older Americans, major religious groups, gays and lesbians and civil liberties and human rights groups. For more information go to: <http://www.civilrights.org>*

*The **Campaign for Community Change** works with community based organizations in several states to conduct large scale voter contact and mobilization programs focused on low-income people of color. This program moves hundreds of thousands to the polls and strengthens the power of its partner organizations to advocate for their needs and values to policy-makers. For more information go to: <http://www.campaignforcommunities.org/>*

***USSA**, the country's oldest and largest national student-led organization, develops current and future leaders and amplifies the student voice at the local, state and national levels by mobilizing grassroots power to win concrete victories on student issues. For more information go to: <http://www.usstudents.org>*

***PowerPAC.org** is a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization whose mission is to increase electoral participation of people of color in order to build political power in support of a social justice policy agenda. For more information go to: <http://powerpac.org/>*

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