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## Questionnaire for Presidential Candidates

The following four issues were a priority for a substantial majority of participants. It is essential that we hear your views on these questions.

**ISSUE AREA: HEALTH CARE. Our health care system is in disarray. The cost of private health insurance is increasing at an annual rate in excess of 14 percent, far outpacing wages. Individuals are paying more out of pocket and receiving fewer benefits. 46.6 million Americans, including nine million children, are uninsured, and the number of uninsured is on the rise. States, suffering severe fiscal problems, are cutting eligibility and benefits in Medicaid and other health programs. Tens of thousands of people die from medical errors each year. Vital medical information continues to be withheld from pregnant women, sexually active teenagers, and populations at risk for STDs, while 87 percent of U.S. counties have no abortion provider.**

**As President, what will you do to solve our nation's health care crisis?**

As President, I will ensure that the 45 million Americans, including nine million children, who currently don't have health care coverage are able to obtain it. Affordable health coverage for all is a moral issue, not just an economic one. And I believe it is an urgent national priority. Since day one of my campaign I've spoken about guaranteeing every American affordable health care. I've offered three principles that will guide my work: cost, quality, and coverage.

I know from the numerous times I have reached out to help reopen stalled contract negotiations that health care coverage is often one of the main barriers to resolution. By ensuring that every American is covered and able to access high quality care, we will better ensure that the cost of health care coverage is equitably shared between workers and employers and that the cost of insuring the highest risk individuals is shared throughout society.

We currently spend \$2 trillion annually on health care, more than any other country in the world, without seeing the results we need. I have proposed a seven point plan that would reduce health care costs by \$120 billion a year. My plan would: create a groundbreaking national prevention initiative to reduce the incidence of such diseases as diabetes and cancer; institute a "paperless" health information technology system; transform care of today's chronically ill population to improve outcomes; constrain excess prescription drug and managed care expenditures; and put in place common-sense medical malpractice reforms. The plan would also focus on using more computer technology; coordinating and streamlining the care of chronically ill patients; offering individuals and small businesses market access to larger insurance pools; improving the quality of care through a best practices institute; getting prescription drugs costs under control; and reforming medical malpractice.

I know from experience that we have to build consensus to get universal coverage. I'm proud to have fought for universal coverage over a decade ago – along with my friends in organized labor – and I will get it passed as President. I'm going to reach out, talk to the American people, and work with Congress to get the job done. As President, I'll fight for universal coverage so that all Americans are secure in knowing that they won't lose coverage because they lose a job.

I am proud to have helped create the State Children's Health Insurance Plan as First Lady. This was the single largest expansion of health insurance in a generation and today SCHIP covers six million children. As a Senator, I lead the charge to modernize our healthcare technology in order to reduce medical errors and lower the cost of care. I've spent a long time on the problem of coverage, and no one has more scars than me from this fight. I understand the challenges facing our health care system and am ready to lead our country to ensure every American has quality, affordable coverage.

**ISSUE AREA: ENVIRONMENT. Our world is waking up to the implications of the damage we have done to our environment. The flow of ice from glaciers has doubled in the past decade. If nothing is done, sea levels could rise up to 20 feet. There are twice as many Category 4 and 5 hurricanes as there were 30 years ago. Without action, global warming will cause an estimated 300,000 deaths a year by 2035. Pollution continues to do damage. Nine million children have been diagnosed with asthma; between 1980 and 1994, the number of children under 5 with asthma increased by 160%. Each year, 1.8 million to 3.5 million illnesses are caused by swimming in water contaminated by sewage overflows and an additional 500,000 from drinking contaminated water.**

**As President, how will you address the crisis in climate change and the broader need to protect our environment?**

Climate change is a pressing global problem that requires a global solution. I will reassert American leadership on global warming in the international arena and press for global commitments to emissions reductions that can prevent the most dire impacts from occurring. I will do so by taking full advantage of the on-going international negotiation process, augmented by focused discussions with major trading partners, including the G-8, China and India. We will not be successful on the international front, however, unless the U.S. demonstrates our nation's commitment to combating climate change by putting domestic constraints on greenhouse gas emissions and by stepping up America's investments in a clean energy future. To that end, I am a cosponsor of legislation that would require U.S. emissions to be reduced to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. I am increasingly optimistic that this is an issue that Congress will act on, perhaps as soon as this year. If not, I will work with Congress to enact legislation to establish a program for reaching these targets.

In addition, I have proposed a Strategic Energy Fund, which would provide \$50 billion to fund energy technologies that will reduce America's oil dependence and greenhouse gas emissions while promoting new jobs and a cleaner environment. Among other things, this Fund will put money into research, development, and deployment of renewable energy, energy efficiency, ethanol, other homegrown biofuels, and other clean energy technologies. I will reform our energy taxes and present a choice to the gas and oil corporations: either you pay a portion of your profits into the Fund, or you invest an equal amount of money into biofuels or other renewable sources of energy.

**ISSUE AREA: EDUCATION. A high-quality public education is essential to ensure opportunity for all Americans. In 2000, 2 out of 3 fourth graders couldn't read proficiently and 7 out of 10 inner-city and rural fourth graders couldn't read at the most basic level. The most recent data on urban 12th graders finds that 84% are not proficient in math and 83% are not proficient in science. For students who do graduate, attending college now means taking on substantial debt as costs have risen and grants are scarce. Between 1994**



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**and 2004, college costs skyrocketed by 30% and 26% at public and private colleges, respectively.**

**As President, how will you address the glaring deficiencies and persistent failures of so many schools in our public education system? How will you ensure access to higher education for all Americans?**

I have been working to improve our schools for almost thirty years. When I was First Lady of Arkansas, I chaired the Arkansas Educational Standards Commission where I worked to raise standards for Arkansas' schools. I believe every child should have access to a high quality public education that prepares them to compete in the 21st century. Excellent public schools are essential to our democracy and our competitiveness. Every child - not just children whose parents can afford it - should have the same chance to succeed and to fulfill his or her God-given potential.

As President, I will establish high-quality pre-kindergarten education for all four year olds through a federal-state partnership. Studies show children aged 2-4 who participate in high quality, intensive preschool interventions are less likely to repeat a grade, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are employed at higher rates and earn higher wages breaking away from the achievement gap. We need to support children and families at this critical stage of children's development to give them the best chance to succeed.

I will also fully fund No Child Left Behind in order to provide schools and teachers with the resources necessary to improve their school. I support accountability, but I think we need to make some adjustments to No Child Left Behind so that it rewards schools that are succeeding rather than just punishing schools that are struggling. I support changing the way we measure progress to ensure that we capture each student's progress over time.

In addition, I believe we should do much more to recruit, retain, and support teachers, especially in schools with the greatest need. I am proud to have created the Transition to Teaching and School Leadership programs, both of which have provided millions to school districts to recruit and support teachers and principals from non-traditional backgrounds in order to alleviate the teacher shortage and increase the pool of outstanding teachers and principals in high need areas.

Finally, as President, I will work to make college affordable and accessible for all who want attend. The costs of college have risen by more than one third at public schools and 50% at private schools since 2000. Yet, the Pell Grant and other federal financial assistance programs have failed to keep pace with the rises in cost. I have introduced legislation to increase the maximum Pell Grant; to reduce the cost of student loans; to increase the HOPE and Lifetime Learning tax credits; to end the student lending abuses; and to rein in the growing cost of college by providing for greater transparency of cost increases. When I am President, I will work to ensure that everyone who wants to attend college is able to do so.

**ISSUE AREA: CIVIL RIGHTS. Despite significant progress, discrimination is still a reality for too many Americans. For every dollar white men earn, women earn approximately 77 cents, Latinas earn 56 cents, and African-American men earn 75 cents. Women are more**

**likely to suffer violence; a woman is raped every 6 minutes and battered every 9 seconds. At the federal level and in most states gays and lesbians lack even basic civil rights protections. Affirmative action is being eliminated from the public sector, with colleges becoming increasingly homogeneous and opportunity blocked for many black and Latino students.**

**As President, what will you do to end discrimination and promote equality for all, regardless of race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation?**

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I will promote equality for all through the policies I champion; the appointments I make; the justices I nominate; and my words and actions. For more than thirty five years I have been an advocate for children, families and disadvantaged and minority populations. And I have taken a leading role in the Senate in spearheading initiatives that will expand the circle of opportunity and break down prejudices.

As President, I will make a strong commitment to fully enforcing our anti-discrimination laws. My administration will restore the historic reputation of the Department of Justice and return the Civil Rights Division to its original mission as a body that actually enforces people's civil rights, instead of ignoring them. I will appoint an attorney general that actually cares about the rule of law. I will work to restore the historic reputation of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division as a body that vigorously enforces people's civil rights.

This President has gutted the Civil Rights Division, and shirked its responsibility to enforce our laws. Over the past 6 years, the Bush Administration's has filed only 32 Title VII employment discrimination cases. The Clinton Administration filed 34 cases filed in just the first two years in office. I will also restore the Administration's cuts to the EEOC's budget, which have resulted in a 20% staff reduction while amassing unprecedented backlogs of discrimination charges.

I will also appoint Justices to the Supreme Court that understand and respect our Constitution's civil rights guarantees. In only a few short months, the Roberts Court turned back the clock on *Brown v. Board of Education*, endorsed an unjustified and restrictive interpretation of Title VII protections against pay discrimination, and overturned a century-old consumer protection precedent.

And I will supplement rigorous enforcement with a commitment to promote diversity in our public institutions and our private businesses. I will set an example by making sure that my administration recruits minorities at the highest levels. I will make the case to America's companies that diversity equals good business sense, which will lead to increased profits and a return on investment for their shareholders. And I will recognize corporations who have the best diversity on their board of directors, not just in their workforce. My campaign looks like America, and so will my Administration.

I will also enact legislation to tackle gender discrimination. The problem of pay discrimination hurts women and costs families an average of \$4,000 a year. In order to address it, I have championed two pieces of legislation. The *Paycheck Fairness Act* will: prohibit employers from punishing employees who share their salary information with their co-workers; (sharing salary information is often essential for understanding that discrimination exists and addressing it.); toughen the penalties associated with violating the Equal Pay Act; teach women and girls negotiation skills; reward model employers; and strengthen the ability of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to crackdown on equal pay violations. I have also worked with my colleagues to introduce legislation to lift the statute of limitations on equal pay claims. This



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legislation seeks to address a Supreme Court finding against Lilly Ledbetter who had proof she was being paid between 15 percent and 40 percent less than each of her male counterparts, including those with less seniority, but was denied back pay and compensatory and punitive damages because she had exceeded the statute of limitations.

Finally, I will enact the *Employment Non-Discrimination Act* of which I have been an original co-sponsor since I entered the Senate. Currently, in 33 states, individuals can be fired or discriminated against because they are gay, lesbian or because of their gender identity. It is inconceivable to me that people who work hard and do a good job every day can still be fired because of who they love. It's unfair, it's un-American, and I will put a stop to it when I am President. I was proud to help champion the New York state version – called the *Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act* (SONDA) – which was signed into law in late 2002, and I look forward to addressing this important issue at the federal level.

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The following three issues were a top priority for a significant number of participants. We would appreciate hearing your views on these questions as well.

**ISSUE AREA: WAGES. Millions of working families struggle to make ends meet because their jobs fail to pay a living wage. Wages have fallen by 3.2% in real terms since October of 2001, while inflation and costs of living continue to rise. With the federal minimum wage stuck at \$5.15/hour for almost 10 years, 31 states have recognized the inadequacy of \$11,000/year and raised the minimum wage on the state level. Still, there are an estimated 7.4 million Americans who are classified as working poor.**

**As President, what will you do to lift hard-working American families out of poverty?**

For my entire career I have worked to improve the welfare of those who are the least fortunate among us, particularly children. From representing abused and neglected children as a young lawyer, to serving on the board of the Children's Defense Fund, to creating the Early Head Start program as First Lady, I have worked to ensure every child can reach his or her potential. One of my husband's proudest accomplishments is that during his administration, poverty dropped to its lowest level in two decades and seven million families were lifted out of poverty. Since then, the number of families in poverty has risen consistently – from 31.6 million in 2000 to 37 million in 2005.

I will use three strategies to make progress in this area. First, under my leadership we will care for the sick, the disabled, those who cannot care for themselves. We'll do this by providing health care for all and by strengthening our safety net – increasing the welfare grant, which has been shrinking for six years, and raising the minimum food stamp allotment to combat hunger. Second, we'll reward work for those who are capable of working. No parent who works full-time should have to raise their children in poverty. We will expand child care assistance, grow the EITC, which has been called the greatest anti-poverty program ever created, strengthen unions, which give us good jobs, and continue to increase the minimum wage.

And finally, we'll rebuild our infrastructure of opportunity. We'll create a high quality early childhood education system so every child starts school ready to learn. We invest in proven K-12 reforms, reduce the dropout rate, and make college affordable and accessible for everyone who wants to go. We'll also make more opportunities available for lifelong learning so those who need to acquire additional skills later in life won't be held back. And we'll help people build assets by supporting savings, putting home ownership back in reach for low income Americans, and acting aggressively to protect families from predatory lenders. And we will achieve guaranteed, high quality health care for all Americans. America will only fulfill its promise as a society when every child born into poverty can rise above his or her circumstances.

**ISSUE AREA: SENIORS. Seniors in America remain are increasingly vulnerable. Half of today's workers do not have any retirement plan on the job and more employers have stopped offering guaranteed pension benefits. Americans' savings rate is now less than zero; only about half of families have any retirement savings. Seniors who want to remain independent are forced into nursing homes, instead of receiving personal care at home or in assisted living facilities. Health care costs continue to claim a greater share of seniors' fixed income.**

**As President, what will you do to ensure that our seniors have financial and medical security?**

Seniors are living longer than ever before. The baby boomers are beginning to retire and as they do, there will be increasing pressure on our healthcare and retirement systems. I have worked to put in place the structures and supports that will enable seniors to grow old with dignity and security. I have fought against elder abuse and worked to protect the integrity of Social Security and Medicare. I passed legislation to provide respite care for caregivers of elderly and disabled Americans. As a member of the Senate Select Committee on Aging, I helped lead the effort to fight off President Bush's ill-advised proposal to privatize Social Security. As Congressional Alzheimer's Task Force, I fought to lift the ban on stem cell research and increase our investment in research for treatments and cures. And I secured important provisions to enable more services covered by Medicare to be provided to people in their homes.

As President, I will maintain the integrity and structure of Social Security as a life-long, guaranteed, defined, dependable monthly benefit for aging Americans and scrutinize the growing practice of companies entering into bankruptcy as a tactical maneuver so that they can shed their pension and other obligations to workers.

I will also take steps to protect elderly consumers from fraud and deceptive marketing in the long-term care insurance market. Overall, the number of reported abuse cases against the elderly jumped 20% between 2000 and 2004.

I will lower prescription drugs costs by: allowing Americans to reimport drugs from other industrialized countries; allowing Medicare to negotiate for lower prices; expanding access to generic drugs; and addressing the inadequacies of the Medicare prescription drug benefit. Americans pay the highest prices in the world for drugs, yet there are commonsense solutions that would bring these costs under control.

I will also support policies and programs that allow seniors to live independently at home throughout retirement. I fought to include a provision that increased access to home and community-based services in the Medicare prescription drug bill; proudly co-sponsored the



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*Community Choice Act*, which gives individuals who are eligible for nursing home services or other institutional care equal access to community-based services and supports, like attendant services; and spearheaded legislation to support respite care, which provides assistance to family caregivers who account for 80 percent of the long term care provided in the U.S. And I have proposed to use state-of-the-art chronic care coordination models within Medicare to provide care for Americans afflicted with chronic illnesses.

**ISSUE AREA: IMMIGRATION. America is a nation of immigrants. Yet today's immigrants face an atmosphere of hostility, violence, and a badly broken system of laws. Employers depend on immigrant labor, but recent policies have emphasized only enforcement, leading to worker exploitation. From 1986 to 1998, the border patrol budget increased sixfold and the number of agents on the southern border doubled to 8,500. Despite these efforts, millions of undocumented immigrants arrived to work in our fields, hospitals, and restaurants. Only 5,000 visas per year are granted for unskilled workers.**

**As President, what is your plan for fixing our broken immigration system?**

Our immigration system is in crisis. The laws we currently have on the books are inadequate and no longer serve our best interests. As a nation, we place a premium on compassion, respect, and policies that help families, but our immigration laws don't reflect that.

I have consistently called for comprehensive immigration reform that respects our immigrant heritage and honors the rule of law. I believe comprehensive reform must have as essential ingredients, a strengthening of our borders, greater cross-cooperation with our neighbors, strict but fair enforcement of our laws, federal assistance to our state and local governments, strict penalties for those who exploit undocumented workers, and a path to earned legal status for those who are here, working hard, paying taxes, respecting the law, and willing to meet a high bar.

I strongly believe we need to do more to know who is in our country by securing our borders and ensuring that employers comply with the law against the hiring and exploitation of undocumented workers. I support deploying new technology that can help stop the flow of undocumented immigrants into the country and the implementation of that can ensure that an employer verification system that is universal, accurate, timely and does not lead to discrimination and abuse by employers.

Along with these changes, I believe it is imperative that we repair those broken portions of our immigration system that irrevocably damage families and force citizens and lawful immigrants to choose between their newly adopted country and living with their spouse or children. We have a national interest in fostering strong families. This is why I introduced an amendment during consideration of the immigration reform bill that would have taken steps to protect the sanctity of families. Our American values demand no less.

And I understand that our immigration policies have a direct impact on American workers. I oppose a guest worker program that exploits workers and creates a supply of cheap labor that undermines the wages of U.S. workers. I believe all workers deserve safe conditions and decent wages. I support an Ag Jobs program, which will keep our agricultural industry vibrant while

enabling agricultural workers to receive the fair wages and labor protections they ought to receive.

Comprehensive immigration reform will be a top priority under a Hillary Clinton Administration.