



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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Grassley Works to Help Americans Without Health Insurance

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, today called the high number of Americans without health insurance unacceptable and pledged to develop and consider solutions.

“No one will argue that it’s unacceptable for millions of Americans to lack access to health care coverage,” Grassley said. “For most of us, quality health care is an expectation. Whether it’s regular check-ups or visits to specialists, it’s often easy to take our health care coverage for granted. We have to remember that millions of Americans and their families aren’t so lucky. For the uninsured, health care often is catch as catch can. That’s no way to live.”

Grassley’s comments came at a hearing at which experts documented the breadth and diversity of the uninsured population, an important task for crafting solutions. A hearing on Thursday, March 15, 2001, at 2:30 p.m. will examine solutions.

Grassley said the portrait of the uninsured is diverse. The hearing documented that:

- In 1999, 42 million Americans – 18 percent of the non-elderly population – were uninsured.
- The number of uninsured has grown by nearly 10 million people over the past decade.
- The number of uninsured has grown steadily since 1994, with a slight decline between 1998 and 1999.
- Three-quarters of uninsured adults are employed. Lack of insurance from employers is more common for workers who work part-time, work for small companies, or work in agriculture and construction.
- Minorities, immigrants and young adults are most likely to be uninsured due to income or employment.
- Uninsured rates vary greatly across states largely because of (1) differences in industries and employer-sponsored coverage; (2) disproportionate shares of low-income or immigrant families across the country and (3) the scope of state Medicaid programs and success of state children’s health insurance programs.

Grassley said Congress has made strides in recent years to fill gaps in health care coverage, such as allowing adults with disabilities to work without losing health coverage and giving low-income women with breast cancer access to treatment. However, Grassley said, much work remains.

“Doctors are treating millions of Americans every day with the most advanced technology and science,” Grassley said. “Americans are experiencing longer, healthier lives than ever before. We can’t settle with having world-class medicine and a health care system that leaves millions of Americans behind.”

