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CPPP URGES ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS TO MOVE FORWARD ON NATIONAL HEALTH CARE REFORM

On Monday of this week, Congress was poised to enact major health care reform legislation. On Tuesday, after a single special election in Massachusetts for a seat in the United States Senate, Congress is discombobulated. But an election in Massachusetts is not the bellwether for what the country needs or wants when it comes to health care. In Massachusetts, 98 percent of the people already have good health insurance.

Americans have elected a President, 435 Members of the House, and 100 Senators, for a total of 536 elections. All these elections count, and every Congressman must represent the interests of their district and every Senator their state, and all must do what is best for the country. For reasons that have been exhaustively documented, the country needs national health care reform. We urge Congress to take a larger and longer view and move forward.

Texas particularly needs national health care reform: 6.1 million Texans have no health insurance, including 1 in 3 working-age adults and 1 in 5 children. In light of Tuesday's special election, some have talked about narrowing the scope of pending legislation to address only health insurance reform. But that won't help Texas because so many Texans cannot afford health insurance.

If Congress abandons two of the key provisions of reform—help with premiums and out-of-pocket costs for low-to-moderate income Texans and Medicaid expansion for working poor adults—Texas will see very little reduction in uninsured citizens. Over 70 percent of uninsured Texans have incomes below 250 percent of the federal poverty income level (FPL), and only slightly more than 1 in 10 uninsured Texans has income above 400 percent of FPL, the upper limit for premium and cost-sharing assistance under the House and Senate bills.

We urge the Administration and Congress to move forward with national health care reform. We have prepared a side-by-side [analysis](#) from our state's perspective of the provisions of the two bills and what they would mean for Texas. We also discuss the expected new costs and responsibilities for state government, as well as the potential benefits to the state budget and to our state's overall economy. However the nation goes forward, the issues will remain the same, and this analysis will be useful in assessing the best policy choices for Texas.

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The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy institute committed to improving public policies to better the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans.