

# Is there a doctor in the house?

## Candidates prescribe remedies for health care

By SCOTT MCPHERSON

The Equinox, Keene State College

As health care takes on an increasingly important role in the 1992 election, candidates are proposing a variety of plans to cure the ills of an aging population and ensure that the young can afford adequate health care.

The United States and South Africa are the only two industrialized nations without a system of nationalized health care.

### Pat Buchanan

**Policy Proposal:** Keeping to traditional conservative values, Buchanan would offer a medical Individual Retirement Account which could be used to pay for health care costs.

**Problems:** Buchanan is strictly opposed to any increase in federal spending. He would face opposition over his desire to trim federal aid programs, a move which would harm the low-income Americans who need health care initiatives the most.

### George Bush

**Policy Proposal:** Bush offers federal support for private health insurance. Individuals whose income level falls below the poverty line would receive a federal voucher to buy insurance. Bush has not said if college students can qualify

for the vouchers. He also urges small businesses to form networks to campaign for lower rates.

**Problems:** The price tag accompanying Bush's proposal, \$100 billion over five years, will likely doom the bill. While he offered a 38-page list of funding options, the President didn't specifically say how he would fund the system. While he has promised to control Medicaid and Medicare expenditures, his system will do little to curb rising health care costs.

### Jerry Brown

**Policy Proposal:** Brown's "Family Bill of Rights" would include the right of Americans to have some form of health care. His single-payer system, modeled after the Canadian health care system, would work to control costs. The federal government would act as insurers, footing the bill and negotiating fees within the industry. Brown also emphasizes what are quickly becoming buzzwords on college campuses: wellness and prevention.

**Problems:** Brown has offered few specifics on how to finance his single-payer system, but says his 13 percent flat rate income tax would cover costs.

### Bill Clinton

**Policy Proposal:** Clinton promises to deliver a health care initiative within his first year in office, one which includes proposals for long-term and prenatal care. Clinton believes he can create enough savings by cutting health care costs so that he wouldn't have to raise taxes.

**Problems:** Taking on the big guns in the health care and insurance industries will be a difficult battle. Saving \$125 billion is easier said than done.

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92

## Give \$2,354 and call me in the morning

By TOM BUCKLEY

The Crimson White, U. of Alabama

Most Americans don't think about health care or its cost until they need it.

Yet in 1989, health care expenditures amounted to \$604 billion, or more than \$2,354 per person. By the year 2000, it is estimated that costs will have risen to more than \$1.6 trillion—with nearly \$17 of every \$100 earned going to pay for health care.

Costs are rising rapidly, leaving many unable to afford adequate health care. Many people are looking to this year's presidential election to bring about reform in the health care system.

"There are a lot of reasons why this had become the major issue," said Campbell Thomson of the Federation of American Health Systems, the trade association representing 1,400 of the nation's investor-owned hospitals and hospital management groups. "The cost of health care has grown. The government is only willing to pay for a portion of its patients. And private health insurance has been picking up the costs of those uninsured and that has made premiums increase."

All of this has left an estimated 38 million Americans without any form of health

insurance, many of them young adults just getting out of college. A survey of national insurance agencies shows that virtually all of them delete students from their parents' coverage when the student turns 23.

"Health care may not be in front of the minds of college-aged persons," said Ted Bobrow, a spokesman for the Washington, D.C.-based American Association of Retired Persons. "But they need to be covered just as much as anybody else."

"Health is very important to all of us, no matter what the age," said Charles Fabey, a professor of aging studies at New York's Fordham U. and chairman of the Federal Council on Aging during the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations. "So much of health has to do with what we do for ourselves. What we eat and drink, all of the things in which we overindulge...it affects our health. We are almost over-reliant on the medical care system to pick up on our shortcomings."

Health care becomes an even greater problem as we age. The elderly comprise only 12 percent of America's population, yet they are responsible for one-third of total U.S. health care expenditures, according to the Center for the Study of Aging at the U.

of Alabama. The elderly consume three times more health care resources than those under 65.

And America's need for affordable health care will continue to grow. In 1988, 440,000 Americans age 45 and over required long-term health care. By the year 2000, it is estimated this number will increase to 500,000, and by the year 2020, the number will have tripled to 1.5 million, according to a study done by the Alabama Gerontological Society. All of this will put our present health care system under an incredible strain.

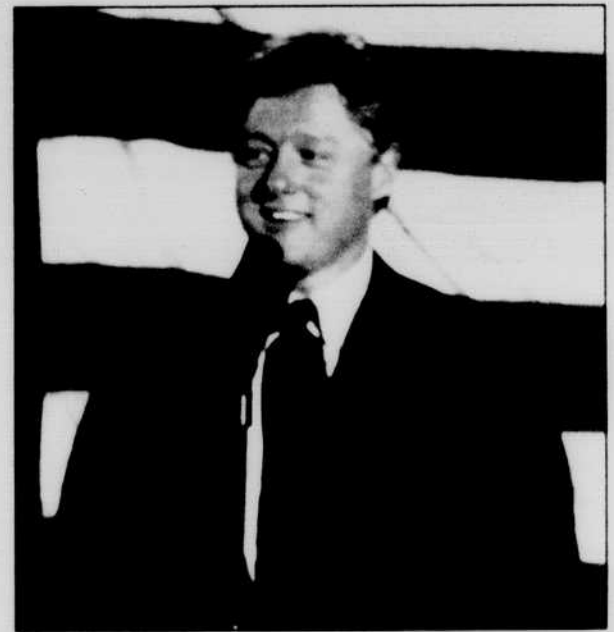
"One of (the AARP's) top priorities is to reform the nation's health care system," Bobrow said. "Many people end up spending their life savings on medical care, leaving spouses and children to cope with the aftermath."

The situation is critical and getting worse. "The problem is at the national level," said Ed Charles, a medical economist and research professor of medicine at the U. of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine. "We are on schedule to end up with some catastrophic problem, and legislation will have to be passed before anything meaningful will be done."

"Unfortunately, whoever becomes president in 1992 will not be able to do anything," he said. "Our (present health care system) is set until around the turn of the century."

Bobrow, however, is more optimistic. "In the last eight months there has been acceleration toward reform," he said. "I don't have a crystal ball, though, so I don't know when Congress will finally act."

Scott McPherson, The Equinox, Keene State College, contributed to this story.



MARK HEILEMANN, THE EQUINOX, KEENE STATE U.

Clinton promises fast action on health care reform.

### Paul Tsongas

**Policy Proposal:** Through managed competition, Tsongas hopes to reduce health care costs. He would encourage competition within the health care industry, allowing consumers to choose their providers. His plan also would provide coverage for unemployed and part-time workers.

**Problems:** The upfront cost, \$8 billion, is among the lowest of all the proposals. The program would be funded through a 6 to 8 percent payroll tax on business. However, the thought of increased taxes is usually enough to kill a bill.

## Register to vote or stop whining

By GREG KLEIN

The Auburn Plainsman, Auburn U.

Too bad registering for classes isn't as easy as registering to vote.

"Young people sometimes think that they aren't ready to be in the mainstream," said Juanita Eber, president of the Atlanta/Fulton County League of Women Voters.

"But youth is always the redemption of a country because they are the future," Eber added. "Therefore, it is important for them to vote as early and as often as they can."

You can't vote, however, unless you register.

While places to register vary by state, the most consistent place is the county courthouse. You must register in the county in which you will vote.

Two factors that vary are how long you must be a resident prior to registering and how far in advance of the election you must register.

Thirty days is the standard for both, but some states don't require you to meet either until the day of the election.

If you have registered previously but didn't vote in the 1988 election, you should call your local courthouse to make sure you're still registered.

Chances are you won't be. All but nine states have procedures for purging registrations of people who fail to vote.



BRIAN KRATZER

THE KANSAS STATE COLLEGIAN, KANSAS STATE U.

An aging population has vaulted the health care issue to the forefront.