

## **Raising Women's Voices 2008 Action Campaign Overview**

The successful national conference in Boston April 17 and 18 has launched Raising Women's Voices! More than 270 participants from 23 states came together on the campus of Simmons College to discuss how to shape health care reform efforts so they meet women's needs and how to make women's desire for high-quality and affordable health care audible and visible in a new way. Participants rated the conference very highly – describing it as an inspiring learning environment and praising the wide range of experiences, skills and resources offered.

Now we're building on the energy, relationships and ideas generated at the conference with our 2008 Action Campaign. Our goal is to make sure that women's health advocates will be front and center in efforts to make health care reform a top priority for public officials and candidates for public office at the national, state and local levels. If we want health reform to meet the needs of women and families, we first must make reform a reality!

### **What are the immediate 2008 Action Campaign priorities?**

Informed by the results of a conference participant survey and the guidance of colleagues in the women's health and consumer health reform movements, RWV's coordinating team from the Avery Institute, National Women's Health Network and MergerWatch identified three key priorities for immediate action:

- Fighting insurance company practices of **refusing to sell policies, or charging more, to women with pre-existing medical conditions**, like breast cancer, diabetes, asthma, pregnancy or even having had a cesarean section delivery.
- Insisting that health reform address the persistent problem of **health disparities that give second-class healthcare to women of color, women with disabilities, low-income women, young women, immigrant women and women in the LGBT community**.
- Demanding that health reform make coverage affordable for women and families by **addressing the increasing cost of insurance premiums, deductibles and co-pays**.

### **What can I do to be a part of the RWV 2008 Action Campaign?**

This is an election year, and health reform is high on the list of public priorities, so the RWV 2008 Action Campaign is designed to make sure women's voices are heard at candidate forums, town hall meetings and other events where this issue will be discussed throughout the summer and fall.

RWV staff have prepared a set of [Fact Sheets \(click for link\)](#) and [Advocacy Talking Points / questions \(click for link\)](#) on each of the three priority issues. These give women's health advocates a quick overview of each issue, and sample questions to ask elected officials and candidates about their commitment to health care reform that addresses women's priorities. You can use these materials in many ways:

- Go to local town hall meetings held by your members of Congress and U.S. Senators. Ask questions about these priority issues.
- Schedule district office visits with your state and federal representatives to educate them about these issues and urge them to take action on them.

- Go to candidate forums and rallies. Ask what these candidates will do to reform the health system and address these priorities.
- Participate in events organized in your area by health care reform advocates like [Health Care for America NOW](#) (click for link) and raise these issues.
- Download the fact sheets, make copies and take them to summer fairs and events in your area. Hand them out, and talk to people about these issues.
- Link to these fact sheets from your organization's website. Blog about these issues. [Join our Facebook group!](#) (click for link)
- Write letters to the editor to your local newspapers about these issues, based on the fact sheets and talking points.
- Organize events on college campuses when students return in late August and early September to discuss health care reform and its impact on young people.

#### **How do I find out about town hall meetings and health reform events in my area?**

RWV staff will be tracking announcements of these events and posting links to them on our website ([www.raisingwomensvoices.net/RWV-UpcomingEvents.html](http://www.raisingwomensvoices.net/RWV-UpcomingEvents.html)). Check regularly for events in your area. Also, watch your local newspapers for announcements of events. Call the offices of your local representatives, or visit their websites, to look for announcements of town hall meetings.

In a number of places around the country, there will be RWV regional coordinators who will keep a close eye on upcoming events and arrange for women in those areas to participate. [A list of these coordinators is coming soon.](#)

#### **What do I do after I participate in an event?**

We want to know about what you have done! Please send an e-mail to [info@raisingwomensvoices.net](mailto:info@raisingwomensvoices.net) with a brief account of the event you attended, including the date, place, public official or candidate who was involved, what you said, and what kind of a response you got. We will be inviting women to submit postings for an RWV action campaign blog, so let us know what you can contribute!

#### **What comes next, after the 2008 Action Campaign?**

This Action Campaign is only the first of several phases of work that RWV will be carrying out to link women's health advocates with consumer health advocates as health reform efforts move forward nationally and in many states in 2009. In all of our work, we will be increasing visibility for women as advocates for health care reform; articulating women's health priorities to build support from public officials, candidates and the public; building credibility and strong working partnerships with progressive health reform organizations by supporting their campaigns (to the extent they are consistent with our [RWV Principles](#) (click for link) and demonstrating the value of women's health advocacy.