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NEWS

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Presidential Candidates Ducking Long-Term Care Costs

*PHCA President & CEO to appear on 'Pennsylvania Newsmakers'
to discuss impending 'fiscal crisis' of 77 million baby boomers' retirements*

HARRISBURG, Nov. 16, 2007 --- Who is going to pay for the long-term care needs of nearly 80 million baby boomers?

Democratic candidates, who debated Oct. 30 in Philadelphia, came and went without addressing one of our nation's most serious social and fiscal challenges

That the issue wasn't discussed comes as no surprise, said Dr. Stuart Shapiro, President and CEO of the Pennsylvania Health Care Association (PHCA). The association conducted a content analysis of Republican and Democratic presidential hopefuls' official campaign Web sites and found that nearly all of the candidates are ignoring the problem.

"America is rapidly heading into a fiscal tsunami of elder care that dwarfs in magnitude the collective crises in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid," Dr. Shapiro said.

Dr. Shapiro will appear on "Pennsylvania Newsmakers," which begins airing this weekend, to discuss PHCA's analysis and the importance of engaging state and federal leaders in a discussion about how the nation's long-term care infrastructure will be maintained and funded.

With Pennsylvania's rapidly aging population, long-term care is a critical issue. The state ranks third nationally by percentage of population 65 or older, and fourth in the number of residents 85 or older.

"With the first of 3.2 million baby boomers set to begin turning 62 next year, we need a new and vigorous debate in the 2008 presidential campaign," said Dr. Shapiro, who has had two columns published on the topic: the first in the Philadelphia Inquirer in May 2007 and the second earlier this week in the Harrisburg Patriot-News. You can read the columns at www.phca.org.

Dr. Shapiro's column also is the top story this week in the esteemed Harvard School of Public Health's "World Health News," a weekly news digest from the school's Center for Health

Communications for an international audience of policy-makers, journalists, public health researchers, practitioners and advocates.

Dr. Shapiro is calling for a bipartisan national commission on long-term care reform similar in stature and scope to the landmark National Commission on Social Security Reform established by President Ronald Reagan in 1983, the last time America seized the opportunity to address the fiscal shortcomings of a key retirement pillar.

“While I believe the solution to this crisis should not --- and cannot --- be just another costly government-funded mandate, and that we must lay greater stress on individuals’ responsibility to plan and save for their long-term care needs using a variety of market-based mechanisms that enable compounding interest and time to work for us and not against us, the presidential candidates may have other alternatives,” Dr. Shapiro said.

“Right now, though, we have no idea what they honestly think,” Dr. Shapiro said.

According to PHCA’s non-partisan analysis, which was conducted Oct. 15-18, the eight leading Democratic candidates mention “Social Security,” “Medicare,” and “Medicaid” a combined 323 times, but “long-term care” is mentioned just eight times. Results were similar for the seven top Republicans. Where a count of “Social Security,” “Medicare” and “Medicaid” totals 71, not a single GOP candidate mentions the phrase “long-term care.”

“Bipartisan reform of decades-old programs --- designed in a different era to solve fundamentally different historical challenges --- is not an option, but a necessity,” Dr. Shapiro said. “We should all insist that Republican and Democratic presidential aspirants not be allowed to sidestep or ignore this significant domestic priority any longer.”

“Pennsylvania Newsmakers,” with host Dr. G. Terry Madonna, is the state’s premier politics and public policy talk television show. The show will air regionally as indicated below:

- WGAL Channel 8 (Harrisburg and Lancaster) at 11 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 18 and 2 a.m. Monday, Nov. 19.
- WBPH (Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia) at 8:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 19.
- WKBS 47 (Altoona) at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 17.
- WPCB 40 (Pittsburgh) at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 17.
- CATV Channel 8 at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 20 and 1 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 21.

PHCA is a statewide advocacy organization for Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable older residents. Members comprise for-profit, nonprofit and government providers. PHCA, along with its sister agency, the Center for Assisted Living Management, represents more than 300 long-term care and senior service providers that care for almost 33,500 elderly and disabled individuals.

For more information call 717-221-1800 or visit www.phca.org.

Video streaming of the entire “Pennsylvania Newsmakers” program featuring Dr. Shapiro will be available at <http://www.newsmakerstv.com/archive.php?id=298>.

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