



Advocating for Physicians and the Health of all Nebraskans

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Note: Survey Findings are available on the News Section
of the Nebraska Medical Association Web site www.nebmed.org**

Contact: Pamela Avery
402-408-1918/303-807-1797
pam@turnerstrategies.com

Nebraskans Favor Health Coverage for All, Fear Losing Theirs
Independent poll shows overwhelming support for increased access to coverage, lower costs

(OMAHA, Neb. – May 29, 2008) – While 9 in 10 Nebraskans have health care coverage, 8 in 10 fear becoming uninsured, and 9 in 10 support an affordable health care plan for all—regardless of health status. These are among key findings of the 2008 “Nebraskans on Health Care Issues” survey commissioned by the Nebraska Medical Association (NMA) and released at the Nebraska Health Care Summit today.

The rising cost of health care is the top health issue cited by Nebraskans, in keeping with national trends. In second place is expanding access to health coverage. Among other findings:

- About 3 in 4 Nebraskans (76 percent) support a sign-up requirement for health care coverage, compared to 59 percent nationally.
- About 3 in 10 insured Nebraskans (31 percent) said they postponed or skipped medical services in the past year to save money.
- About 3 in 10 Nebraskans (31 percent) say they had problems paying for medical services in the past year, including 1 in 4 insured Nebraskans (26 percent).
- About 1 in 5 insured Nebraskans (18 percent) spent at least \$5,000 on health care last year.
- Of the uninsured, 3 in 4 (76 percent) had trouble paying for a medical service last year; 2 in 3 (66 percent) postponed or skipped care to save money; and 4 in 10 (40 percent) were denied health care coverage.

The independent survey was conducted in April by KRC Research, a national polling organization. The survey polled a demographically representative cross-section of more than 500 Nebraskans. There was no statistical difference in the responses of urban versus rural survey respondents.

According to national studies, more than 1 in 4 Nebraskans age 65 and under lacked health insurance some time during 2006 and 2007, and an estimated 1 in 10 Nebraskans was uninsured for all of 2006. To address this health care crisis and related unsustainable increases in health care costs, the NMA this year adopted a health care reform initiative that calls for insurance coverage for all Nebraskans, with

-more-

subsidized premiums for those who cannot afford coverage. The plan also addresses cost reduction initiatives; disease prevention and wellness education programs; incentives for health care providers to establish practices in medically underserved areas of the state; and an exchange of health care information statewide at local health care delivery sites.

“There is a moral imperative for quality, affordable health coverage for all Nebraskans,” said John Benson, M.D., who with Richard O’Brien, M.D., co-chairs the 25-member NMA Health Care Reform Task Force. “This survey underscores the concern state residents have about their own health coverage and their overwhelming support for health coverage for everyone.”

O’Brien added that the majority of the uninsured are workers who lack employer health care benefits or the means to pay for insurance. “No one should go without care, yet many do. Lack of health coverage often leads to more expensive, delayed medical treatment, needless suffering, and avoidable deaths,” said O’Brien. “We all pay for unreimbursed care of the uninsured one way or another in suffering or in money. It’s a hidden tax.”

The NMA is enlisting organizations throughout the state to form a broad-based coalition to support state legislation to ensure that all Nebraskans have quality health coverage.

The Nebraska Medical Association was founded in 1868, and currently represents nearly 3,000 Nebraska physicians, students and residents. The mission of the Nebraska Medical Association is to serve physician members by advocating for the medical profession, for patients and for the health of all Nebraskans. For more information, visit www.nebmed.org or call (402) 474-4472.

###