



For Immediate Release
December 19, 2008

CONTACT: Nicole Korkolis
Carmen Group
212-983-6100
korkolisn@carmengroup.com

Summit Conversations: Exploring the Emerging Consensus on American Health Care for the 21st Century

WASHINGTON, DC –The first of a series of “Summit Conversations” among America’s leaders will highlight the emerging national consensus on key components of a reformed 21st century health care system on January 28 at the University of Miami. President Donna Shalala will be the host.

Sponsored by *America’s Agenda: Health Care Education Fund*, Summit Conversations will be held in cities throughout the country over the next 12 months. They will bring together 100 of America’s leaders in business, labor, government and the health care sector.

America’s Agenda President Doug Dority said, “Our country’s ability to solve its health care crisis depends in no small part on whether our political and private sector leaders can articulate a shared vision of the kind of health care system that will meet the needs of 21st century Americans.”

“We have an historic opportunity,” said Dority. “Americans are demanding health care they can afford and that’s just what the new Obama administration promises to deliver. There can be no reform without consensus, and the Summit Conversations aim to highlight and explore the consensus emerging from important sectors of our economy and state governments.”

For critics who ask how our nation can afford to focus on health reform at this time, Dority said “inaction would be much more expensive.” He cited a recent Congressional Budget Office report that America’s fiscal gap is “driven primarily by rising health care costs.” These costs are expected to climb higher, more than doubling in the next ten years.

He noted that in state health care reform campaigns over the last several years, including those in Maine, Vermont, and West Virginia, *America’s Agenda* has observed an emerging consensus about key elements of a health care reform strategy that can meet the

needs of business, labor, and government. “Everyone is getting hurt by soaring growth in health costs,” emphasizes Dority. “We have built our successful state strategies around a set of common ground principles that have potential to unify the interests of business and labor on this issue.

“There are important political and policy lessons to be learned from our state work that will help guide enactment and implementation of the national health care reform Americans need and deserve,” Dority said.

The elements of consensus that are articulated in the Summit Conversations “will be critically important guides and motivators for the new Congress to shape the direction of American health care in our new century,” said Dority.

He said it is fitting that Dr. Shalala host the first Summit. “She has been a strong advocate of health care reform and served eight years as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. Last summer she was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian award.”

Other leaders participating in the Summit include Congressman Dick Gephardt, a leader in the fight for health care reform over many years; Terry O’Sullivan, general president of the Laborers’ International Union of North of America, Billy Tauzin, president and CEO of PhRMA and Becky Patton, president of the American Nurses Association.

Cleveland Clinic Director of Information, Dr. C. Martin Harris will also join the Miami Summit Conversation. “Health Information Technology is essential to linking the components of our fragmented health care delivery system,” said America’s Agenda Executive Director Mark Blum, “and Dr. Harris is a leader in harnessing the power of HIT to transform American health care into a cost-effective, high quality system.”

Moderator for the Summits will be widely respected political commentator Bill Press, winner of three Emmys and a Golden Mike Award.