

Why the Presidential Candidates Should Address Long-Term Care Bob Kerrey and Newt Gingrich

Recently, Hillary Clinton rolled out a wide-ranging policy agenda for reforming long-term care. With the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries approaching, we strongly advise her Democratic and Republican rivals to put forward their own long-term care agendas and engage in thoughtful, vigorous debate on this pressing issue.

Majorities of voters in both parties think the contenders for the White House have not spent enough time addressing the looming national crisis in long-term care. They want to see our long-term care system reformed. Voters recognize that our elderly population is exploding, and that the demand for quality long-term care in private homes, assisted-living facilities, nursing homes, and other settings is surging. Rising healthcare costs, a rapidly aging citizenry, and strained resources make it clear that, as a country, we are not in a position to meet the needs of older Americans.

We have reached out to all the presidential candidates urging them to catch up with the voters whose support they are aggressively courting and present full policy platforms that explain how they will reform our long-term care system before it collapses. Voters do not want to wait until 2009 for results. They want the candidates to get to work much sooner.

We can help. Since 2004, we have co-chaired the National Commission for Quality Long-Term, an independent, bipartisan commission charged with improving long-term care in America. Our commission, which includes members of Congress, elected officials, and noted experts, has just released its final report with recommendations on how to achieve a comprehensive national solution to this crisis.

The report is available at www.ncqltc.org/pdf/Final_Report_NCQLTC_20071203.pdf

Bob Kerrey, a Democrat, is a former U.S. Senator from Nebraska and current President of The New School, a university in New York City. Newt Gingrich, a Republican, is former Speaker of the House and founder of the Center for Health Transformation.