Issue Guide: Coping with the Cost of Healthcare: How Can We Pay for What We Need?

Date: September 25, 2008

Location: Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens, GA

Moderators: Jill Severn, Ellyn Echols

Coping with the Cost of Healthcare at UGA

Report by: Jan Levinson

On Thursday, September 25th UGA students, staff, and faculty, together with citizens from the surrounding community turned out to discuss the rising cost of healthcare at the Russell Library. This event was the second forum in the Georgia Deliberations Fall Forum Series.

Jill Severn, who manages civic engagement and outreach work for the Russell Library, and UGA student Ellyn Echols served as moderators for the discussion. Echols said a few words about her involvement in the Roosevelt Institution, a student think-tank on campus devoted to researching and writing public policy, before laying out the ground rules for the discussion and helping the crowd to express their stakes in the issue at hand. Will Riley, a Georgia Tech student, commuted from Atlanta to serve as the scribe-recorder, while UGA students Matt Brandenbugh and Kelly Ann Frizzell served as official observers.

Like the forum at the Carter Library (9/17/08), this discussion focused on the pros and cons of three approaches to solving the problems of the current U.S. healthcare system. But the makeup of the attendees and their comments varied from the event in Atlanta. The group was split evenly between men and women -- the majority composed of students and a sprinkling of young professionals. Although several participants made frequent remarks, no one dominated the conversation and most everyone chimed in at least once.
Notable Moments in the Deliberation:

- One returning participant, a retired government manager for unemployment insurance, suggested that businesses should play a larger role in coverage costs for employees.

- An extended discussion regarding the need for increased preventative care led to a series of questions about the rising cost of medical services and the declining number of general practitioners. When asked why basic medical services cost so much, the crowd was largely silent and pensive.

- Several participants heavily favored the approach championing universal health care, emphasizing that all Americans should have access to a basic level of health care.

- At the evening’s conclusion a few attendees remarked that the current economic crisis will put health care on the back burner in the coming elections, but inevitably there will have to be changes in the system.

For more information on the Russell Forum for Civic Life in Georgia, visit [http://www.libs.uga.edu/russell/rfclg](http://www.libs.uga.edu/russell/rfclg), call (706) 542-5788, or email russellforum@gmail.com