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NEWS RELEASE

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Actuaries: Unemployment May Boost Number of Uninsured

Actuaries Urge President to Refocus Health Care Debate, Forge a “Sustainable Solution” for All

WASHINGTON – 8 Sept. 2009 – The American Academy of Actuaries Senior Health Fellow Cori Uccello is expecting there to be an increase in the number of people without health insurance when the U.S. Census Bureau reports the latest figures on Thursday. According to last year’s Census Bureau estimates, nearly 46 million people were uninsured in America.

“Becoming unemployed often leads to a loss of health insurance coverage,” Uccello said. “As unemployment figures continue to rise, the number of people without health insurance will most likely rise as well. This sobering prospect adds further importance to the president’s upcoming address on health care reform.”

The actuaries are urging President Obama to use his address tomorrow to the joint session of Congress to reframe the debate on health care reform and focus on creating a sustainable solution to benefit all Americans. According to the actuaries, that sustainable solution will require policymakers to address health spending growth.

“Although the president has stressed his desire for any health reform legislation to be deficit neutral, any long-term solution also needs to focus on controlling health care spending growth,” Uccello said. “With national health care spending poised to take up greater and greater shares of the economy, improvements to the way health care is delivered and reimbursed are needed to ensure not only that people receive the care that they need, but also that the money spent is spent wisely. By ensuring that the health care system is affordable for individuals, employers, and the government alike, such improvements can help individuals who already have coverage as well as those who would be newly insured under any new health reform initiative.”

Uccello said she is hopeful that policymakers will refocus the debate and work on fundamental changes to the health care system that will lead to a long-term sustainable solution, noting that actuaries are eager to help policymakers understand the implications of such changes.

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For more information on the American Academy of Actuaries and its work on health care reform, visit: http://actuary.org/issues/health_reform.asp. To schedule an interview with Cori Uccello, please contact Andrew Simonelli, assistant director of communications for the American Academy of Actuaries, at 202.785.7872.

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The American Academy of Actuaries is a 16,000-member professional association whose mission is to serve the public on behalf of the U.S. actuarial profession. The Academy assists public policymakers on all levels by providing leadership, objective expertise, and actuarial advice on risk and financial security issues. The Academy also sets qualification, practice, and professionalism standards for actuaries in the United States.