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**HEALTH CARE LEADERS WELCOME REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF
UNINSURED, SAY NEED FOR ACTION REMAINS STRONG**

WASHINGTON – While welcoming today’s Census Bureau report showing a slight decrease in the number of uninsured Americans – a reversal of a trend that has seen consistent increases in the number of uninsured over recent years – health industry leaders said the need for action to make health coverage more accessible is no less urgent.

“We’re pleased that the escalation in the number of uninsured reversed in 2007, but this is not an occasion to celebrate,” said Mary R. Grealy, president of the Healthcare Leadership Council, a coalition of the nation’s leading health care companies and organizations. “There are still far too many Americans without health coverage and addressing this problem has to remain our nation’s foremost domestic priority.”

Ms. Grealy said there are several steps that policymakers should be taking to make health coverage more accessible for working families, including the use of tax incentives to help more people afford employer-offered health insurance and more aggressive outreach to help eligible households enroll in existing public coverage programs.

HLC has conducted outreach pilot programs in 10 cities, providing uninsured individuals with information on how to find affordable private health coverage or determine their eligibility for public programs. Of the 33,000 people who have come in contact with these educational initiatives, over 16,000 have come away with some form of private or public coverage.

“Certainly, the next President and Congress need to be bold in helping link more Americans with the health coverage they want and need. In the meantime, though, there is much we can and should be doing to connect the uninsured with health insurance resources that are available right now.”
