

GOVERNMENT & MEDICINE

Advisory group recommends universal coverage

Americans would be willing to pay extra to expand access to health care, finds a panel directed by Congress to look for answers.

By [Elaine Monaghan](#), *AMNews* staff. June 26, 2006.

Washington -- A group charged by Congress with assessing Americans' views on how to fix the health care system concluded that most people find it "unintelligible" and recommended universal coverage by 2012.

"While most Americans are generally satisfied with their health care, too many Americans are being let down by their health care institutions," the Citizens' Health Care Working Group wrote in its interim recommendations, issued this month. "Many people are afraid of the health care system, they are bewildered by its complexity and are suspicious about who it aims to serve."

The panel, appointed in February 2005 by the U.S. comptroller general, will present its findings to Congress and President Bush after a 90-day period of public debate.

The 14-member body includes physicians, nurses, hospital officials, economists and other experts. It based its interim report on six hearings with experts, 31 meetings and other events in more than 50 communities, all major health care opinion surveys conducted since 2002, more than 10,000 responses to its own Internet polls and nearly 5,000 commentaries submitted by the public.

"[Consumers] see a rigid system with a set of ingrained operating procedures that long ago became disconnected from the mission of providing people with humane, respectful and technically excellent health care," wrote the group, whose formation was mandated by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003.