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**ACC NEWS**

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**President's Page: The Campaign**

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**DANIEL J. ULLIYOT, MD, FACC***President, American College of Cardiology*

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The American College of Cardiology (ACC) has embarked on a campaign to influence the health care reform debate in a favorable way for our patients. The Board of Trustees approved the initiative at the Atlanta meeting and voted substantial ACC resources for this effort.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Health Care Reform met initially on November 9, 1993, and with remarkable unanimity recommended a vigorous campaign to influence the public debate on health care reform, particularly as it would affect patients with heart disease. The Committee recommended focusing on the reform proposals that would affect patient care and the doctor-patient relationship. Our fundamental concern, or "gut issue," is that patients with heart disease receive appropriate, timely, high quality medical and surgical care in any reformed system of health care delivery.

The purpose of the campaign is threefold: 1) to represent the best interests of our patients; 2) to satisfy the demands of our membership for positive action in the health care debate; and 3) to signal to the American public that we, their doctors, care deeply about the way health care is delivered, lest our silence or sitting on the sidelines be interpreted as indifference to or approval of the proposals being debated.

This initiative represents a significant departure from the historic role of the ACC. We have traditionally emphasized education of our membership. Although we have played a constructive role in government and private sector affairs, we have heretofore not engaged the public directly.

We believe the time has come for us to act as advocates for our patients in the public discussion about changing the way we deliver health care in this country. Our core themes or messages are that high quality cardiovascular care is best done by experts; that patients must have direct or assured access to the cardiovascular specialist, respecting the patient's choice of physician; and that a linkage exists between specialty care and quality, prevention, efficiency (cost savings) and future progress in medicine.

The ACC is counting on you, its membership, to play a major role, including acting as spokespersons to local, regional and national audiences.

As the campaign evolves, the paradigm of cardiovascular specialty care will be extended to all specialty care, leading to powerful coalitions that will attempt to reach those decision makers who shape the debate on health care reform. Ultimately, we expect that our efforts will cause positive action to be taken.

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