

## Bill Clinton in Chicago pitches health care; muses on "Mad Men"

By [Lynn Sweet](#) on November 11, 2009 3:28 PM



(Sun-Times photo by Al Podgorski)

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CHICAGO--America's health-care crisis would be worse than it is without non-profit groups providing the health care that government and the private sector do not, former President Bill Clinton said in Chicago today.

"Most people do not know the cope of the problem," Clinton said at the Palmer House Hilton in a speech to about 700 supporters of Chicago House, a non-profit that provides housing and care for 1,100 people with AIDS.

Clinton just met with Democratic senators in Washington Tuesday, urging them to pass health-care reform this year. Clinton shared some of the arguments he made for urgent action:

"We are spending 16.5 percent of our income on health care," he said. "The next most expensive country is Switzerland, at 11.5. The next most expensive is Canada, at 10.5. All of our competitors -- Germany, Japan -- are between 9 and 10 percent. We are cutting a check at the beginning of evrey year and burning it."

The high cost of health care in America shows up in our homeless rates, fewer college graduates and high unemployment rates, Clinton said.

"In parts of Michigan where they have 30 percent unemployment after the collapse in the car industry, part of that is because Gen Motors had \$1,500 a car in health-care costs and Toyota had \$110," Clinton said.

"Let's assume they pass the best health care bill imaginable," Clinton said. "There will still be a gap between what the government can provide and what the private sector can produce."

Chicago House gets about 60 percent of its budget from government sources. Its chief executive, Stan Sloan, said much more is needed, especially better funding of Medicaid funneled through the state.

Since 1985, the non-profit has run about five buildings in Uptown and the West Side where people living with AIDS are housed, Sloan said. Today's fund-raiser was expected to bring in about \$400,000, he said.

Clinton mentioned the shootings at Fort Hood, Texas, and tried to tie it into a broader discussion about people of the world respecting each other's differences as he says he sees in Chicago.

"You have people from more than 150 different ethnic and racial groups," Clinton said. "Think about what sparked the tragedy at Fort Hood. Some of the most moving things I have read since the Fort Hood tragedy have been the comments of our Muslim veterans who were horrified by what happened and feel no one will ever trust them again."

Clinton looked out at the diverse crowd and said it was different than a crowd of white men that might be seen on the TV show "Mad Men."

"You ever watch that TV series 'Mad Men?' " Clinton asked. "If I keep watching this program, will I ever find a happy person? Great television. Good drama. But a lot of really painful reminders in that show about how black people were supposed to run the elevators... were supposed to ask permission before they get on an elevator. The way women were treated is appalling, and only occasionally funny to me."