



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**January 24, 2005**

CONTACT: C. Chic Smith

301-443-1592 office / 202-689-4885 cell

Email: [csmith@ahrq.gov](mailto:csmith@ahrq.gov) / Web site: [www.citizenshealthcare.gov](http://www.citizenshealthcare.gov)

## **BATON ROUGE AREA PARTICIPATES IN NATIONWIDE DISCUSSION ON HEALTH CARE**

*Citizens' recommendations to be considered by Congress, White House*

**Washington, D.C.** – The Baton Rouge metropolitan area will host the initial community dialogue on health care in America presented by the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. The community meeting will be held on **Thursday, January 26, 2006**, from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm at Louisiana State University, Lod Cook Alumni Center, Nolands/Laborde Hall, 3848 West Lakeshore Drive, Baton Rouge. Baton Rouge based Louisiana Public Health Institute and Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals are assisting in local recruitment. The meeting is free and open to the public, but registration is requested. Registration is available at [www.citizenshealthcare.gov](http://www.citizenshealthcare.gov). (Press may contact Chic Smith directly for interviews and photo opportunities.)

Liz Sumrall, Senior Health Care Advisor, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals stated "We are extremely pleased to bring together individuals from across the state who are invested in Louisiana's health care system especially in light of the issues many of our citizens here in Louisiana face around their health care needs due to disruptions brought on by the most recent natural disasters."

"Access to quality affordable health care is a universal need," stated Dr. Erick Baumgartner, Director of Policy and Program Planning at the Louisiana Public Health Institute. "This is an opportunity to assure that those who make decisions about health care are better informed."

The community meeting will feature a multimedia presentation that provides information on the nation's health care system including problems related to cost, quality, and access to care. This will be followed by more focused discussions in small groups. Participants will share their ideas about how to improve the health care system.

The Working Group, a nonpartisan group authorized by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003, is charged with listening to the views of the American people and developing recommendations for the President and Congress to provide U.S. citizens with "Health Care that Works for All Americans." The *Health Report to the American People*, was released in October and serves as a basis to engage the American people in a dialogue on health care access, cost and quality issues. The Working Group consists of 15 members --14 citizens of diverse backgrounds from across the country, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

###