Your Congress, Your Health

On March 11, we asked PARADE readers to weigh in on the health topics that matter most to you. Hundreds responded with powerful words on everything from health care to the perilous state of medical research. “Ten years ago, I nearly lost my life to no health insurance,” wrote one reader. “I was between jobs and could not afford early testing to catch my cancer before it spread.” One research scientist lamented how far America is falling behind in biomedical research: “It will take one to two decades to recover from the exodus of scientists that is now occurring. The U.S. economy and its citizens will ultimately suffer most.” Others told of the struggle to care for diabetic children or parents with Alzheimer’s. (To read all the comments and offer your own, go to Parade.com.)

Research!America, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to health research, took your comments and crafted a 15-question survey for all members of Congress. To find out how your U.S. Representative and two Senators answered, just go to yourcongressyourhealth.org and enter your ZIP code. If your elected officials have not yet responded, you can send an e-mail from the Web site and urge them to reply to the survey.

With health care so vital to all of us, it’s important to know where our representatives stand.

Japan vs. DUI

Japanese carmakers have been developing ways to reduce the number of accidents involving drivers under the influence of alcohol. Toyota is testing a car (set to debut in 2009) whose engine shuts down if the driver is drunk. It features sensors on the steering wheel that measure the alcohol level in the driver’s sweat. Wearing gloves? A dashboard camera checks for dilated pupils, and a computer monitors for erratic steering. Meanwhile, Nissan is working on a built-in Breathalyzer that a driver must blow into before starting up. A similar device already is used in the U.S. for some DUI offenders.

What’s Your Carbon Footprint?

Every day, when you drive to work, cook, heat your house or watch TV, you leave behind a “carbon footprint”—the carbon-dioxide gases you send into the atmosphere. Many scientists say these gases are big culprits in global warming. So it’s now chic to know your carbon footprint and how “green” you are or need to be. The EPA has a calculator, but you’ll find a simpler one at carbonfootprint.com. And just in time to upset the last of you June brides, the folks at www.DrivingGreen.com tell us that almost nothing heats the planet like a big wedding: A two-day affair for 250 guests generates 72,000 pounds of CO2.