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Kucinich would create Department of Peace

By Jack Loftus 11/4/03

DURHAM - Congressman Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, spoke at the University of New Hampshire Monday afternoon as part of the Every Child Matters Presidential Primary Forums.

The forums, led by anchorman and political director Scott Spradling of WMUR-TV 9 and Every Child Matters President Michael Petit, asked the same six questions asked in the previous seven forums, which focused on issues including health care, child abuse and after-school care.

An energetic and outspoken Kucinich was frequently applauded as he detailed a platform that he labeled more specific than his opponents.

The center of the Kucinich plan for the presidency was the cabinet-level Department of Peace, which, if created, would address directly the domestic-abuse problems within the homes of Americans.

"Child abuse constitutes a national tragedy," Kucinich said, adding he plans to work on prevention rather than punishment while challenging old attitudes still present within society.

"The idea of peace is something we want in our own homes," he said.

Internationally, Kucinich said the Department of Peace would meet with the nations of the world to address issues of violence before they begin to percolate.

One of the six questions asked of all the candidates attending the forums addressed the popular issue of universal health care for American children, and the projected price for such a plan.

"My plan would have employers paying 7.7 percent (of an employee's health care), and they would not be at the mercy of insurance companies," Kucinich said.

According to Kucinich, employers are paying 8.2 percent of their revenues to supply coverage for their employees, with the remainder of the funding coming from the federal government.

"We're at a period now when we can't afford to be sick and we can't afford to be well," he said.

Kucinich pledged to take health care away from the for-profit

system that exists now and replace it with a Medicare that covers everything and would cost the same as the previous system.

"As long as health care is a business the people will never have what they need," Kucinich said. "Every child will be covered as well as their parents."

Rounding out the major issues of the forum was a question of education and the funding of higher education institutions.

"Education is central to my life," said Kucinich, a member of the House Education Committee.

Kucinich pledged a change of priorities in the U.S. as president when he promised to achieve the goal of universal education.

"My presidency will be about taking a new direction; it will be a whole new approach for Americans," Kucinich said. "We will move away from fear toward hope, away from despair toward optimism, and from war toward peace."