



# WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler  
District 32



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## ***Rebuilding Medicaid from the Ground Up***

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JEFFERSON CITY – The governor declared earlier this year the extent to which the state must cut Medicaid spending in order to save the program from insolvency and allow for proper funding of other vital services, such as education. Citizens who use Medicaid have been worrying ever since whether they would be dropped from the program. Over the past few months, my fellow lawmakers and I have been striving to come up with a budget plan that doesn't echo the head of state's bleak outlook for the health care system that helps Missouri's poor. Generally we all agree that the Medicaid program is in need of a tighter system of oversight. Eligibility verification will correct some of the flaws, but not enough to make a significant difference. Critics have characterized the necessary cuts as Draconian and drastic—hurtful to many. And, unfortunately, the criticisms are true.

Missouri's current Medicaid program has become so unmanageable that its continuation will require one round of dramatic and painful cuts after another, year after year. The constitutional requirement to fund education first, and the constitutional lid on raising taxes, places the Missouri General Assembly in a no-win situation.

As we move forward in establishing our state budget, we need to face the fact that Missouri's Medicaid program is not flawed—it is irretrievably broken. The reality is that we cannot put a

Band-aid on a broken arm. Missouri taxpayers and those who are genuinely in need of Medicaid assistance deserve an entirely new system—one that uses each tax dollar to its fullest, yet continues to provide health care for Missouri’s neediest citizens.

While the General Assembly is considering substantial cuts, it is also making a legislative move to study and review the current Medicaid program in-depth. A measure, of which I am a co-sponsor, was introduced in the Senate earlier this week that creates a Medicaid Reform Commission to devise recommendations to reform, redesign and restructure an entirely new state Medicaid system to replace the sinking one we currently are struggling to keep afloat.

Our education funding formula is going through a major overhaul, and now it is time to put the Medicaid system through a similar process. With undeniably wide chasms in our state’s budget we are inevitably faced with making cuts to Medicaid. To overcome this economic and social challenge, we will start from scratch to create a better, more compassionate Missouri healthcare system that doesn’t place the brunt of budget cuts on the backs of those who are most in need.

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*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper  
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*