Gibbons Capitol Report
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Healthcare Technology Saves Lives and Saves Money

In the Missouri Senate, one of our main priorities is transforming our current healthcare system to use innovative, life-saving technology not only to help Missourians have available, affordable healthcare but also to track, in real time, anyone trying to defraud the system.

Better Healthcare Technology

Our desire for a more modern system is why we passed Senate Bill 858 to create the Healthcare Technology Fund. This fund will improve the quality of healthcare through electronic medical records, e-prescribing, tele-medicine and tele-monitoring. The Governor has created the Health Care Information Technology Task Force to determine how best to spend the $25 million he recommended in his State of the State address. This money would go toward improving health care technology and to ensure that healthcare information can be readily available to providers, consumers, and public health agencies to improve patient safety by reducing medical errors.

Senate Bill 858 contains an emergency clause, so that once it is passed, Missourians can begin seeing results in the quality of their healthcare through more accurate records as soon as possible.

The Institute of Medicine says between 44,000 and 98,000 people die each year because of errors in paper medical records. That is an outrage. Going to electronic medical records and e-prescribing will save lives, improve health and save precious tax dollars by tracking those who steal from the people who really need help. We must also establish severe and vicious penalties for anyone who would try to hack into someone's personal electronic medical records or use them inappropriately.

Real-Time Results

With innovative technology and e-prescribing, I envision a system where an elderly woman on several different medications could go to her doctor and not have to worry about being prescribed medicine that could react badly with her other prescription medicine.

In the same way, if someone is "doctor shopping" to obtain multiple prescriptions in order to abuse drugs like OxyContin, this new technology would track them and the state would

know about the illegal behavior immediately. In the paper system we have today, tracking these cases is a much longer, more difficult process.

We are working hard to create a healthcare system for the 21st Century that will make sure all Missourians have available, affordable healthcare, without having to pay for those who defraud the system.

Cracking Down on Provider Fraud
With the same technology we use to help patients get the best available medical care, we will also find new and innovative ways to crack down on providers who defraud the Medicaid system. The *Kansas City Star* estimates corrupt billings by medical providers could total $575 million a year in Missouri alone. The vast majority of this fraud is committed by contractors who provide medical services, from doctors, hospitals and nursing homes to therapists, drugstores and in-home workers. We began passing legislation to crack down on fraud last session. To date, the Department of Social Services has recovered a total of $138 million in fraudulent payments. An estimated $104 million dollars was saved through annual reverifications of Medicaid recipients, meaning those who earn too much or who don't live in our state will no longer take taxpayer money and medical benefits away from those who need our help. But the process is far from over.

I established the Senate Special Committee to Investigate Medicaid Fraud and charged them with seeking ways to reduce fraud in our state's $6 billion Medicaid system. The committee met this week for the first time. The committee plans to work with the Program Integrity Unit and the Medicaid Fraud Office in the Attorney General's office to develop metrics to measure and red-flag fraud, and also to make immediate, substantive proposals before the General Assembly.

Experts testified this week on how Missouri can combat and cut down on fraud by providers. Fraud in the Medicaid system has grown in recent years because of Medicaid's focus on expansion rather than ensuring providers don't defraud the system. We must crack down on companies that would steal from our most vulnerable and defraud Missouri's taxpayers.