



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**For Immediate Release:**  
**January 23, 2006**

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# THE CAUTHORN REPORT

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### *21<sup>st</sup> Century Healthcare – Making Myth a Reality in Missouri*

Our nation's health care system is outdated, inefficient and inadequate. However, we can save lives and money by transforming our own health and healthcare in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich delivered that message to the Senate.

Gingrich, who co-founded the Center for Health Transformation, says American policymakers need to think about new, long-term ways to provide health care to Americans. He advocates three key points to transforming health care as we know it: center health care on the individual and family level; focus on preventive care and wellness, instead of more costly emergency care; and utilize the latest technology. And I couldn't agree more.

Gingrich advocates giving individual patients greater independence in choosing their own health-care plan. By supplying patients with better information about prescription drugs and hospitals, individuals could put together a plan that gives them the best care at the best possible price. Instead of an oversized state-sponsored program like Medicaid, Gingrich points out that vouchers and tax credits could be available to encourage low-income citizens to buy long-term health insurance.

Every day we use technology to maximize knowledge and choice while reducing costs. With Travelocity and Expedia you can book airfare and hotel rooms. These sites offer more choices and competing costs – making trip and vacation planning quicker than ever.

Healthcare can do the same. Florida has established a website where consumers can compare prescription drug prices. When Celebrex is \$86.04 at one pharmacy, and \$220.54 at another pharmacy, which one would you choose? The first is the obvious choice, and the other location will either lower their price or lose business.

Corrective eye surgeries now have higher quality at a lower cost. Why is this? Because transparency leads to good decision-making. Consumers can call around and check out prices. If a company doesn't give a price, their potential customer is lost. When someone spends their own money, regardless of the amount, they are more likely to find the best deal. Bringing choices to Missourians, we can have higher quality health care at an affordable price.

We can also focus on long-term health by improving the habits of citizens. Gingrich said childhood obesity and diabetes indicate we live in a culture of poor health decisions. Meanwhile, our health-care systems focus on curing and rehabilitating citizens once they are already in poor health. By working to develop a population that embraces healthy eating and exercise, we can prevent illness and reduce the cost of health care for all Americans.

Gingrich also emphasized the need for health-care systems to invest in modern technologies to deliver their services. Health care needs to work at the speed of the modern world; however, like many entities, it is bogged down in paper records and poor communication. By speeding up the process of delivering health care, we can save money and lives.

Nearly 100,000 people die each year due to paper medical records. That is like a Boeing 747 crashing daily. If that happened planes would be grounded. So should paper files. E-files can literally save lives. Electronic records ensure pharmacists don't misread a prescription because of sloppy handwriting. They won't dispense pills knowing the customer is taking another med that would be fatal.

We must end a system that makes a person decide between work and state-sponsored health care. We must look long term to take care of our frail and elderly. Further, we must have citizen responsibility and healthy living. Our system should have costs that are viewed as investments.

If businesses had to budget like government, we would see no new endeavors. Government looks at year-to-year costs. Private sector looks at investments. We must invest in our health.

While these ideas might seem like common sense, changing any governmental system is a revolutionary undertaking. I support new ways of thinking about health care in Missouri and throughout the nation. There is clearly a lot of room for improvement – and northeast Missouri has a lot to gain.

These concepts must now grow from myth to reality. This can only be done by rolling up our sleeves and going to work. Now is the time.

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