



# THE STOUFFER REPORT

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## Efforts to Provide Better, More Affordable Health Care Continue

Most of us spend more time calling auto mechanics, plumbers and other blue-collar businesses when something is broken than we do our doctors and hospitals when we are ill. In this new age of technology, we need our doctors' offices and hospitals to be transparent and have cost information available to us at any time. If you break an arm or leg, you should know before you see a doctor how much he or she is going to charge to put it in a cast. If you are going to have to stay in the hospital, you should know how long the average stay is for your ailment and your risk for staph infection.

That is why I was pleased to learn about recent federal efforts to improve access to health-care information and promote the adoption of health information technology standards. Meanwhile, I am chairing the Senate Interim Committee on Certificate of Need to figure out how we can provide better transparency in the health-care field.

On Aug. 22, President Bush signed an executive order empowering Americans to find the best quality and value of health care. The four-part plan:

- Increases pricing transparency by directing federal agencies to share with beneficiaries information about prices paid to health-care providers.
- Boosts transparency in quality by sharing information on the quality of services provided by doctors, hospitals and other health-care providers.
- Directs federal agencies to use improved health information technology systems to facilitate the rapid exchange of health information, which will increase efficiency, reduce medical errors and improve quality of care.

- Directs federal agencies to develop and identify approaches that facilitate high-quality and efficient care.

Together, these initiatives will provide more information for Americans seeking health coverage.

Missouri's Certificate of Need program (CON) is another effort to ensure effective and efficient health-care services. CON was designed to eliminate the duplication of services. However, currently there is a debate about the benefits provided by CON, and lawmakers are studying the issue. One issue everyone in the CON committee has agreed on is that there needs to be more transparency in our health-care field.

As consumers, we have a right to know how our hospitals and doctors are rated in affordability and treatment.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at [bstouffer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:bstouffer@senate.mo.gov).

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