



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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Health Care Based on Need, Not Dollars

This week, my colleagues and I in the Senate spent a great deal of time working on repairing Missouri's state sponsored health-care system. I believe that it is our moral obligation to give to those in need, however, the legislation as it stands doesn't enough support to the truly needy, children, elderly, and disabled of Missouri.

The new plan is outlined in Senate Bill 577, which changes the name of the taxpayer supported health care system to MO HealthNet. The new program presents a lot of good ideas, but I am concerned that these grand plans will not go towards the people that are truly in need of health-care assistance. MO HealthNet is supposed to focus on preventative care rather than reactive treatment, but, it actually consists of open ended policies that sound good on paper, but may not work in practice. The plan requires patients to go through "health care advocates" in order to have access to health care. This will only place another hurdle between the patient and their health care provider.

State health care is supported by the taxpayers, which should mean that every taxpayer is treated fairly and evenly. However, it is my experience that benefits tend to go to the more heavily populated areas, while rural communities are left behind. In order for this plan to work, it should provide help to those in need throughout the entire state. The bill outlines three possible choices for health care with varying levels of coverage and treatment. It is my concern, through past experiences, that rural Missouri's choice will be limited to only one program that ends up being the least level of care at the highest price.

Two years ago, state-sponsored health care was in trouble and immediate changes had to be made in order to get the system under control. However, in the process, eligible people in need were stripped of

their health care, leaving children without the opportunity to get a checkup and the elderly unable to afford doctor visits. Disabled people were no longer covered for their basic needs and families earning under \$10,000 annually no longer received family medical coverage. As we create new policy, it is important that we have these people in mind and make sure that they are no longer without meaningful health care. All of these issues end up costing taxpayers more in the long run.

This weekend, the people of the 16th District will gather with family and friends to celebrate Easter, a holiday that reminds us of the meaning of joy, love, and kindness. My beliefs will not allow me to take from the hands of those truly in need and the people of rural communities. While MO HealthNet has received first-round approval in the Senate, it is by no means law. I will continue to work on this legislation and ensure that the basic needs are met and the constituents of the 16th are insured proper coverage for our most vulnerable.

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