



February 1, 2007

IMPROVING HEALTH CARE: A 2007 PRIORITY

The legislative session is off and running. In the Capitol reports I submitted over the past few weeks, I have shared some personal ideas and discussed my committee assignments for this session. This week, I will update you on the progress of specific legislation.

This session I believe the most urgent issue for your Legislature to address is the increasing cost of health care. In Missouri, we have approximately 700,000 uninsured. Approximately 80 percent of those uninsured are employed. Due to the rising cost of health care, many employers can no longer afford to provide health insurance as a benefit to their employees, and many working Missourians cannot afford to buy their own health insurance. Last session, the Senate passed a measure of mine that created the option of HMO coverage with a deductible. Allowing a deductible on HMO coverage is expected to reduce the premium by 22 to 66 percent, making these policies much more affordable. Unfortunately, the House failed to pass the bill. However, I have reintroduced the measure this session and presented it to the Senate Committee on Health and Mental Health this week. I am hopeful that this idea will become law and make a more affordable insurance option available to hardworking Missourians. This bill, combined with legislation that Representative Jay Wasson and I worked to pass last session allowing small employers to pool together and purchase more affordable health insurance coverage for their employees, should make a real difference in working families' ability to afford health care.

I am working with my colleagues to roll out another sweeping health-care reform package in the coming weeks. These reforms will make health care more accessible and affordable to all Missourians, whether the patient is receiving government-provided health care or care that is paid for privately. The proposals we are working on will give patients access to much more information about their health-care options, such as information on the cost and success rates of various providers, treatments and prescriptions. These reforms will empower patients to make more of their own decisions about health care and to do so in a more educated manner.

We have many exciting opportunities to improve Missourians' quality of life right now. Thank you for the privilege of working for you on these crucial projects.

As always, I welcome your ideas, questions and concerns about Missouri government. You may contact me at the Capitol as follows: (573) 751-2234, jack.goodman@senate.mo.gov or by writing to Senator Jack Goodman, Missouri State Capitol, Room 331, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

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