



# WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler  
District 32



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**Week of April 21, 2008**

## Accessible Healthcare for Missourians

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This week, the Senate gave initial approval to [Senate Bill 1283](#), an omnibus piece of healthcare legislation. The bill, known as the Missouri Health Transformation Act of 2008, works to help Missouri families earning low incomes to have better access to affordable healthcare by allowing the state to subsidize health insurance.

Senate Bill 1283 includes a number of provisions that would change the way healthcare is handled in the state. One provision in the legislation would pay the health insurance premiums for working parents who earn up to the federal poverty level, \$21,200 for a family of four. Custodial parents earning up to 225 percent of the poverty level, \$47,700 for a family of four, could have their health premiums paid if they contribute a percentage of their income (totaling no more than \$1,000 a year) into a health savings account. The funds in the account would help pay insurance deductibles. Individuals would be able to fully deduct contributions they make to a health savings account. The goal of the provision is to make health insurance more affordable and portable to low-income families.

The bill also institutes a pilot program for web-based primary care access and telehealth (phone-based) practitioners. This program works to emphasize the importance of preventive care rather than reactive, emergency treatment.

Another provision in the legislation makes it easier for homeowners to make their homes handicapped accessible. The bill increases the amount of tax credits available for these types of improvements and includes additional projects that can qualify for the credits.

The bill also creates the Missouri Health Cabinet to oversee the Missouri HealthNet Oversight Committee. Last year, we passed legislation to make reforms to state-sponsored healthcare, and this continues that progress. The purpose of the cabinet is to promote inter-departmental collaborations and to make sure that services are planned and implemented in a

beneficial way. It would also create a Health Policy Council that would study trends in healthcare and report to the Legislature and governor.

Senate Bill 1283 also contains provisions to ensure Missourians have transparency in their health care services. The bill makes sure that consumers can easily compare prices and the quality of different health plans by making sure data is properly presented and that criteria to compare programs is publicly accessible. The Department of Health and Senior Services would investigate any complaints or violations.

Senate Bill 1283 contains many provisions to try to address the issues currently affecting the citizens in this state. Healthcare is an issue that continues to be a concern in the General Assembly as we work to find ways to provide adequate plans for all Missourians.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper  
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*