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## Nation & Missouri Lawmakers Focus on Health Care

### *New MO Law First in Nation to Address Medicaid Fraud and Abuse*

JEFFERSON CITY — With health care reform a hot topic on Capitol Hill these days and many Democrats and the president working to force a vote on his proposed socialized health care reform, Republicans are also working hard to promote their own health care plan that would reform health care and lower costs without spending trillions of dollars to do it. The outcry for a change in the health care system has reached a fever pitch, and I hope Capitol lawmakers will take a deep breath, slow down and give more deliberation to this critical issue before we find ourselves saddled with a disastrous socialized health care plan.

Meanwhile, as the health care debate ensues in Washington, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and founder of the Center for Health Transformation Newt Gingrich visited Missouri this week to thank state lawmakers for being the first in the nation to pass a law that brings transparency to the MO HealthNet program. Fellow lawmakers Sen. Eric Schmitt (R-Glendale), Rep. Brian Yates (R-Lees Summit) and I joined the Speaker during a press conference on Tuesday in St. Louis to highlight a bill that Rep. Yates and I sponsored and passed — [House Bill 577](#) — which will make it possible for anyone to be able to find what a provider charged for a health care service covered by the MO HealthNet (Medicaid) program with just a click of the mouse. Speaker Ron Richard co-sponsored the bill, and Sen. Schmitt added language that creates the MO HealthNet Data Transparency Program.

This groundbreaking legislation seeks to decrease fraud and abuse in our state-run healthcare system. In 2005, the *Kansas City Star* estimated that fraudulent Medicaid claims could total up to \$575 million a year. By creating a database that makes the costs transparent, it will allow Missouri to move more quickly in identifying fraudulent providers, help us to ensure state funding goes to those in need, and lower or slow the increase in the cost of healthcare to everyone.

As the head of the Center for Health Transformation, Speaker Gingrich is also working to find solutions to the nation's health care problems. During symposiums held across the country and in several books he has written on health care reform, Gingrich stresses the need for Americans to be more responsible and to change their attitudes about their own health and well being. Gingrich also offers his own plan to reform health care and lower costs, with his number one solution to stop the "crooks," i.e. going after providers who are stealing from the Medicaid and Medicare system — a step Missouri has now boldly taken with HB 577. This criminal activity across the country accounts for 10 percent of all health care spending or more than \$200 billion every year.

While the president's health care reform is touted by some as the answer to our nation's health care system, in my opinion it will only make things worse. We can see examples of this in Europe and even parts of our own country where similar reform has been implemented. Many viable alternatives to socialized health care do exist and are being presented in Congress — as they have been proposed and debated in Missouri — that will provide better solutions for improving health care. Inherent in all of them is the premise that a free market system allows patient choice and competition with the belief that consumers can make better decisions about their own health care costs — not politicians and bureaucrats. If the consumer pays directly, many of the problems with our health care system would disappear. But if the government gets involved and becomes your health care decision maker, it can only lead to an inefficient and less responsive system.

As always, if you have any questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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