

Column For Week of March 30, 2009

Senator
Eric Schmitt

Weekly Column

15th District



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Saving Lives and Saving Money When It Comes to Healthcare

For some families in Missouri, relying on state-sponsored healthcare has become a way of life. But I believe ownership of private health insurance is the best option for those who fall near the income eligibility level for government provided healthcare. Eligibility levels change often and offer no security or consistency in coverage to the working poor. By helping these families purchase private insurance rather than relying on state-sponsored healthcare, we can drastically begin to reduce the number of uninsured Missourians and in the process give them ownership and choices in the healthcare decisions they make for their families.

This week, we discussed the Senate's major healthcare legislation, [Senate Bill 306](#). At its core, the legislation creates the Show-Me Health Coverage Plan. The plan offers healthcare coverage to low-income Missourians through the private insurance market. The legislation would make healthcare coverage available, affordable, and portable for some of Missouri's poorest citizens, and would actually save taxpayer dollars because citizens could avoid using hospital emergency rooms as their point of entry into the system. This legislation works to transform a system that was designed to pay bills and change it so the focus is on wellness and prevention outcomes for individuals, resulting in lower costs.

I amended SB 306 to include a provision that I believe will help weed out waste,

fraud and abuse, and make the system more transparent. The amendment would create an internet database of MO HealthNet (our state's Medicaid program) disbursements. The database would protect the privacy of MO HealthNet recipients' information and it would provide much needed transparency to track claims and payments, making it easier to spot instances of fraud. This sort of watchdog measure is an important part of my plan to reform our system. The creation of this online database can save real dollars, and we will have the opportunity to see that patients are using the preventive care that is so important to long-term health.

I added another health-related provision to legislation that received final approval from the Senate this week, [Senate Bill 291](#), the omnibus education bill. My amendment helps children who require long hospital stays continue with their education. Currently, after three days in a hospital, such as Cardinal Glennon or St. Louis Children's, local teachers will work with a student in order to keep them up-to-date on the lessons they are missing. My amendment would make sure that funding for this important program continues by ensuring that the regular state funding that would ordinarily go to the student's school instead go to the school district that is supplying the teachers. We need to provide for the educational needs of these children, some who are fighting life-threatening illnesses, and this amendment would guarantee funding for these services.

Reforming our state's healthcare system is a large project, and I am confident that it will be an ongoing goal throughout my time in the Missouri Senate. I feel the measures we worked on this week demonstrate the major steps in improving the system. I will continue to work on fulfilling my promise to make healthcare more available, affordable, and portable.

If you would like to read about more of the action the Senate has taken this week, check out the Senate's [general column](#), which is updated each week.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions, and concerns. Please feel free to contact me using the information below. If you would like to begin receiving this column regularly, click on the subscribe link on the bottom of the page.

Thank you,
Senator Eric Schmitt

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