

# State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



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## Proposed Federal Health Care Reforms Would Significantly Impact Our State Budget

Federal health care legislation has the attention of the nation — and our state — as a key U.S. Senate Committee nears a vote on proposals that call for the most sweeping overhaul of our country's health care system in a half-century. If the U.S. Senate Finance Committee's health care bill, which recently cleared the financial analysis of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office with its 10-year, \$829 billion price tag, is passed by the committee, it will move to the floor of the U.S. House and Senate for debate within the next few weeks.

Recently, a group of state governors from the majority party signed a standard letter addressed to Congressional leaders in support of working together to achieve health care reform. Six of those governors, including Missouri's own governor, declined to sign the letter — many expressing concern about how health care changes passed by Congress would impact already cash-strapped state governments. Many states are worried about the potential negative impact on state budgets since all of the proposed health care bills propose a major expansion of Medicaid.

Looking at Missouri's state budget, any significant expansion of Medicaid, which is a shared cost to the state and federal governments, would impact Missouri's budget deficit — putting our state in a situation of having to spend beyond our resources. You may recall that earlier this year a proposal passed in the Missouri Senate ([SB 306](#)), but not the House ([HB 156](#)), that would have expanded Medicaid in our state, without a tax increase, via an agreement with private hospitals to kick in more fees that would be used to bring in more federal dollars. Expanding Medicaid to levels outlined in proposed legislation on Capitol Hill could require many states, including Missouri, to raise taxes, make massive cuts, or find the money elsewhere.

Like most of our constituents, the Missouri General Assembly is concerned with providing the best available health care at an affordable cost. We will be closely following this proposed federal legislation with keen interest as it evolves — and with a certain degree of trepidation — depending on the final outcome.

As always, if you have comments or 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 1-877-291-5584.

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