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Fixing Missouri's Broken Health Care System

When Gov. Matt Blunt slashed health coverage and benefits from 400,000 Missourians, he created a health care crisis in our state. Following those cuts, Missourians lost their health coverage at three times the national rate¹, and premiums skyrocketed for those fortunate enough to still have insurance². The Blunt administration turned away more than \$1.5 billion³ in federal health care dollars, and now, more than 750,000⁴ Missourians, including more than 125,000⁵ children, have no health insurance at all.

Jay Nixon has a real plan to address Missouri's health care crisis so that our state can begin moving forward again. Jay Nixon's first order of business will be to restore health care to those who had it slashed by the Blunt administration. But rather than going back to the same old system, Jay will streamline our health care bureaucracy and manage our health care dollars more effectively and efficiently. Jay will also expand coverage to more of Missouri's children -- all while creating a better, more efficient health care system than previously existed.

RESTORING THE CUTS TO HEALTH CARE AND MOVING MISSOURI FORWARD

Jay Nixon Will Restore Health Care To Those Who Lost Coverage Under Matt Blunt. Jay Nixon's first order of business will be fight to restore access to quality, affordable health care for every man, woman and child impacted by the Blunt administration's health care cuts. Cuts to Medicaid in recent years have significantly reduced health care eligibility and service availability. Roughly 100,000 Missourians are no longer covered, and an additional 300,000 lost access to services as a result of the policy changes made by Governor Blunt in 2005⁶. These budget cuts affected children on Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), disabled adults, the elderly and other adults. Estimates obtained from the Department of Social Services say that it would cost \$265.4 million in general revenue to restore health care coverage to 109,811 individuals and restore benefits and services to another 280,000 individuals. This would draw down \$431.2 million in dollars from the federal government that would otherwise go to other states.

Moving Missouri Forward By Finding Ways To Cover More Missourians. Jay Nixon's first step in moving Missouri forward on health care is to undo the damage Matt Blunt did. But he recognizes that moving the state forward means more than just fixing the state's current crisis. It means, bringing stakeholders and policy makers together to find real, long-term solutions. There is no shortage of options for covering more people, but there is a shortage of consensus. Jay Nixon will provide the vision and leadership necessary to make health care a priority in Missouri and increase access to quality, affordable health care for more Missourians.

Saving Tax Dollars And Holding The Line On Skyrocketing Insurance Premiums For Those Who Have Insurance. Jay Nixon's plan will not only provide health care to those who need it most, but it will also help bring down the cost for those who have insurance, but whose premiums are rising because of the cost of caring for the uninsured. In 2007, the state spent over \$5 million⁷ to provide health care to uninsured Missourians. These are dollars that could be going to providing preventive health insurance. But the cost just isn't just absorbed by the state, but by people who are insured. As more and more are uninsured, people who do have insurance pay for it with higher premiums and co-pays. From 2004 to 2006, many Missouri families saw their premiums increase by nearly \$2000.⁸

EXPANDING ACCESS FOR MISSOURI CHILDREN

Jay Nixon Will Work To Expand Access To Affordable Insurance For Children. Under Matt Blunt, barriers to enrollment were erected and premiums implemented, causing a significant increase in the number of uninsured children. Jay Nixon will fight to make sure every child in Missouri has access to quality, affordable health care. Matt Blunt's Medicaid cuts directly affected about 28,500 children⁹. Under Jay Nixon's plan, all Missouri Children would have access to affordable health insurance through one of three avenues, including restoring the health care cuts, reaching out to children who are eligible, but un-enrolled in SCHIP, and allowing families over 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to "buy-in" to the state SCHIP plan.

USING MARKET FORCES TO DRIVE DOWN COSTS FOR CONSUMERS

Fostering Competition With A One-Stop Shop For Evaluating Health Care Options. A market economy is dependent on the availability of information to consumers. Currently, there is no central hub where Missourians can go to compare prices of health care plans, benefits and billing methods. Jay Nixon will work with the Department of Health and Senior Services, health insurance providers and health care providers to create an online one-stop-shop for consumer information on their options for affordable health care. The **Show-Me Health Care Consumer Web Page** will allow consumers to compare prices and plans, increase awareness of available community-based resources and drive down costs of health care by driving up competition.

CREATING A MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Conducting Thorough Performance Reviews Of Missouri's Health Care System And Eliminating Inefficiency. As part of his initiative to make government work smarter and more efficiently, Jay Nixon will begin a process for conducting thorough performance reviews of all state agencies, including any agencies involved with health care delivery in Missouri. Right now, more than 60 state agencies, boards and commissions are involved in our health care delivery. Upon being elected Governor, Jay Nixon will take the current, disjointed health care system and make it more efficient through consolidation, coordination and cooperation. Furthermore, Jay Nixon believes it is important to make sure state health care dollars are going to pay for health services, not to expanding the profit margins of big HMOs and insurance companies.

Convening An E-Health Blue Ribbon Commission To Modernize And Transform Health Care Delivery. Although Gov. Blunt spoke rhetorically about improving health IT in Missouri, he has provided no real leadership on this issue. As Governor, Jay Nixon will convene a Health Technology Blue Ribbon Commission charged with developing a comprehensive short-term and long-term plan to improve health care delivery through technology. Other states, including Kentucky and Tennessee, have done a tremendous job of implementing comprehensive e-health reform quickly and effectively. Their reforms will ensure long-term cost-savings and improved quality of care. Any moves toward a better e-health infrastructure will include managing health records safely, smartly and efficiently.

FOCUSING ON PREVENTION

Prioritizing Prevention. Jay Nixon believes that individuals are ultimately responsible for their own health, and that efforts to promote prevention will save the state and individual Missourians money in the long run. Jay Nixon will focus on prevention by working to ensure all Missouri women have access to adequate pre-natal care, working to increase childhood immunizations, tobacco prevention and cessation, and working to reduce childhood obesity.

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- ¹ St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 8/29/2007
- ² Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Average total family premium in dollars) per enrolled employee at private-sector establishments that offer health insurance by firm size and State (Table II.D.1), years 1996-2006: 2006 (July 2008). Medical Expenditure Panel Survey Insurance Component Tables. Generated using MEPSnet/IC, <http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsnet/IC/MEPSnetIC.jsp> July 17, 2008
- ³ Estimates from the Department of Social Services, SB 539 (2005) and HB 11 (2005) Budget Actions FY06 – FY08; Information provided is based on most recent estimates as of March 5, 2008
- ⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2006, http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032007/health/h05_000.htm
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Summary of Medicaid Cuts Adopted in the 2005 Legislative Session, 5/23/05, <http://www.mfhc.org/downloadfile.php?id=115> ; Missouri Citizen Education Fund, The State of Working Missouri 2007: Health Insecurity on the Rise, August 2007; http://www.missouriprovote.org/Docs/EARN_State_of_working_MO_2007.pdf
- ⁷ Missouri Hospital Association: FRA Program, January 2008; http://web.mhanet.com/asp/Governmental_Relations/pdf/FRA.pdf
- ⁸ Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Average total family premium in dollars) per enrolled employee at private-sector establishments that offer health insurance by firm size and State (Table II.D.1), years 1996-2006: 2006 (July 2008).
- ⁹ Measuring The Decline In Children’s Participation In The Missouri Medicaid Program: An Update, 9/2006; <http://www.masw.org/healthaccess/Measuring%20the%20Decline.pdf>