
May 2009 - With Health Care, One Size Does Not Fit All

WITH HEALTH CARE, ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

By Congressman Jerry Moran

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America is a far-ranging land that many different folks are proud to call home. Americans have different values, ethnicities, religions, education levels, and jobs. A distinct difference that we share is our health care needs. No cut, bruise, scrape, or illness is exactly alike. Even the facilities where folks go for care are very different in size and resources. In fact, the congressional district I am privileged to represent, Kansas' First Congressional District, alone has 75 hospitals - the most of any congressional district in the country! I have visited each of these facilities and have learned that each one faces different challenges. When it comes to America's health care needs, one size definitely does not fit all.

As the health care reform debate begins in Congress, some lawmakers are pushing one-size-fits-all government-mandated universal health care. I am concerned that a Washington takeover of health care would fail to reduce escalating costs and jeopardize quality. The numbers to move 131 million people to the government rolls do not add up. The Medicare trustees recently reported that the "unfunded liability" of Medicare, or amount of benefits promised that are not covered by taxes, is nearly \$38 trillion over the next 75 years! With this staggering shortfall, I do not see how the federal government could deliver the type of care some are promising without cutting care to seniors, rationing critical services, or increasing tax rates.

We should make health care services accessible to every American. We need to provide incentives to empower low-income families to retain or purchase private health insurance. We need to support community health centers and other facilities that provide health care to the poor. We must increase the supply of qualified medical professionals through recruitment and retention incentives. We must reform our medical liability system and reduce frivolous lawsuits that lead to inflated insurance premiums and the practice of "defensive medicine" where doctors order every possible test for fear of being sued. We need to upgrade our outdated health records system through the use of new technology, which will streamline costs and reduce medical errors. We need to allow individuals to utilize health savings accounts and other incentive plans, which engage folks in their health care decisions and incentivize them to be proactive in their health. Finally, we need to start placing as much emphasis on wellness as we do on illness. Both wellness and treatment are essential to maintaining health and reducing costs.

We stand at an important juncture in our health care system. Most agree that our current health care system is broken and unsustainable. Also, almost everyone agrees that, in order to fix our broken system, we must reduce underlying health care costs. It is my hope that we will have a true exchange of ideas and a real debate on the different proposals that will bring some much needed change to our current system. The heartbeat of our nation is fueled by many different hopes and dreams and the health of our nation is not a one-size-fits-all diagnosis.

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