

July 2009 A Prescription for Health Care Reform

A PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM

By Congressman Jerry Moran

July 31, 2009

This month, I will get the opportunity to spend time hearing from Kansans about their most pressing concerns. My guess is that I will hear an awful lot about health care. Given the complexity of the legislation and the impact it will have on families, patients, business owners, and providers, I am relieved that House Democratic leadership did not rush a vote on a bill prior to recess. Now, Members of Congress will have an extended opportunity to visit face-to-face with their constituents about this important issue. While far from a complete list, here are several of my ideas for a common-sense Prescription for Health Care Reform.

- Emphasize Wellness and Disease Prevention - We need to start placing as much emphasis on wellness as we do on illness. Promotion of wellness, fitness, and diet help us lead healthier lives and greatly reduce health care costs. Prevention and wellness are promoted by giving employers and insurers flexibility to reward individuals who improve their health and manage disease. Encouraging medical students to become primary care physicians, who are essential to coordinating care among specialists and managing patient treatment, will help as well.

- Make Health Care Services Accessible to Every American - We need to provide incentives to low-income families to retain or purchase private health insurance that best meets their needs. This is accomplished by extending tax savings to those who purchase coverage. To assist low-income Americans, we can support community health centers and offer tax credits to obtain insurance. Also, it is important to provide financial help to caregivers who provide in-home care for family members.

- Medical Liability Reform - 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. Defensive medicine costs us between \$70-124 billion per year, which equates to over 10% of all our health care expenditures.

- Implement Health Information Technology - We need to upgrade our outdated health records system through the use of new technology, which will streamline costs, reduce medical errors, and eliminate redundant medical tests.

- Incentive Health Care Savings - We need to empower individuals to save now for future and long-term care needs by utilizing health savings accounts and other incentive plans. These plans enable people to take ownership of their health.

- Address the Medical Workforce Shortage - We must educate and train more medical professionals and encourage these providers, through scholarship and loan repayment programs, to practice in underserved areas.

Health care reform must make quality coverage more affordable and more accessible for Americans and allow those who like their current health care coverage to keep it. I support common-sense reform that puts patients first and protects the doctor-patient relationship. I look forward to continuing this discussion with Kansans this August.

###