



KANSAS

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For immediate release:
March 27, 2007

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Time for action on health care

The following is a column by Governor Kathleen Sebelius

Kansas is home to a wide range of first-class health care providers. From big-city hospitals to small rural clinics and doctor's offices, Kansans have access to quality health care throughout the state.

Most Kansans, that is.

One in ten of our neighbors has no health insurance. And even those of us with health coverage face the prospect of continuously rising costs, both for insurance and care.

There's a crisis in our health care system that prevents 300,000 Kansans from getting the health care they deserve. This hurts them, their families, and those of us with insurance, as 16 cents of every dollar spent on health care goes to cover "uncompensated care" – essentially a hidden tax on businesses and families with health insurance. We need to work toward a future in which every Kansan has health insurance; to do anything less is just wrong. While there are a number of ways to achieve this goal, one that doesn't work is to dismantle the health care safety net, as has been proposed by some in the Legislature. While our goal should be the most cost-effective expansion of health insurance, many "market-based" privatization proposals would leave even more Kansans without affordable care.

We need to follow the roadmap provided by the Kansas Health Policy Authority. The authority was created by the Legislature in 2005 to provide expert guidance to state leaders about how we can hold down costs and expand quality health coverage.

Members of the authority have endorsed my proposal to insure every Kansas child from birth to age five, and to do so this year.

The authority has also called on the Legislature to take additional action before they adjourn by providing coverage for more pregnant mothers and working Kansas families, by providing assistance with the cost of insurance premiums. We have a health care crisis in Kansas. We have expert guidance on how best to address that crisis. The time for inaction is over! If you share my concern about Kansans having access to affordable health care they deserve, I encourage you to contact your legislators and urge them to act before they go home for the year.

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