

## **The Issue**

Health care is one of the most controversial and most talked-about topics of our time. Last year, the federal government passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a landmark bill that paves the way for significant health care reform across the United States. Finally, we are opening the door to millions of citizens across the United States who, for too long, suffered from the unfortunate effects of our broken health care system. Despite the successes in health care reform, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act can only be considered a meaningful first step.

Each and every state faces unique obstacles relating to health care, and federal policies are limited in their abilities to cater to the specific needs of every state and its citizens. However, while the federal reform policies will take time to be implemented, Illinoisans and their families can't afford to wait much longer for access to quality health care.

It is estimated that over 1,780,000 Illinoisans are living without health insurance. It is the responsibility of the state government to promptly ensure that all of its citizens have access to real, quality health care. More and more Illinoisans are under-insured. While consumers' cost of health care is growing, benefits are decreasing. The result is a record number of consumer complaints lodged against HMOs in pursuit of access to necessary medical services. Furthermore, the population in Illinois is growing in both size and age. As more Illinoisans require medical attention the state of Illinois must be prepared to contain the cost of health care and ensure that all Illinoisans have access to the quality care they need.

## **Senator Noland's Plan**

Senator Noland strongly supports a comprehensive, state-wide health care overhaul that will work in conjunction with The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act for the benefit of all Illinois residents.

Key components in any state-wide health care plan must include:

- Affordable access to a full range of preventative, acute, and long-term health care services
- Expanding Medicare and Medicaid
- Ongoing improvement of quality health care services offered to Illinois residents
- Portability of coverage regardless of employment status
- Uniform standard benefits for all Illinois residents
- Cost containment of capitol and overall expenditures
- Avoiding unnecessary duplication of facilities and services
- Statewide health care budgeting
- Comprehensive health planning

## **Medicare and Medicaid to Families of the Developmentally Disabled**

Illinois must expand Medicare and Medicaid services to the families of developmentally disabled children. Currently Medicare covers only the first 50 percent of the costs of care needed to raise a developmentally disabled child and excludes coverage for therapy services that brings health care providers into the homes of families to teach parents how to work with their child to develop the proper motor skills and enhance the emotional development of their child. Illinois should expand Medicaid to an additional 1,500 middle income and other non-Medicaid eligible families struggling with the escalating costs of raising a developmentally disabled child with the option of buying into this program at an affordable rate.

## **The Plan for Affordable Prescription Medications**

Illinois must ensure a prescription Plan that provides assistance to every senior citizen in Illinois and makes sure that no senior will have to choose between medicine, a roof over their head, or food again. To this end, Illinois should expand the state's existing Circuit Breaker program to cover all drugs.

Senior citizens have been hit hard by the economy and Illinois's budgetary problems. This fiscal year is no exception. Circuit Breaker grant benefits to older adults and persons with disabilities on and after July 1, 2011 were forced to decrease by half. Again, we must not only restore the grant cutbacks but expand the program to make all prescription drugs more accessible. Currently, the state negotiates some of the worst rebates in the nation and wastes valuable tax dollars that could be better used to improve health care programs in Illinois. A comprehensive prescription plan could be funded through over \$158 million in savings from improved negotiations of rebates from the pharmaceutical industry. Such a plan could build a surplus of over \$900 million within four years that would be dedicated to an Illinois Prescription Drugs Fund.

## **Universal Health Care System**

In order to ensure all Illinois citizens have access to affordable health care, a universal, single-payer health care system solution for Illinois may be necessary.

As such, any comprehensive plan must ensure that everyone in Illinois has, at a minimum, access to preventative care, hospital care, dental care, eye care, rehabilitation, mental health care, prescription drugs, and long-term care.

Valuing consumer choice, those desiring additional health care coverage going beyond the state standard could retain the option of purchasing additional private health insurance to compliment the state sponsored plan.

A universal health care plan, however, would provide Illinoisans with relief from sky-high insurance premiums, excessive deductibles, burdensome co-pays, and many other medical fees that make health care less affordable and less accessible to the people who need it most. A universal health care system would eliminate all of these costly fees and replace them with a much lower tax.

With everyone's participation in a universal health plan, quality health care will be much more affordable and accessible than it has ever been in the past, and instead of having Illinoisans empty their pockets to pay for expensive individual insurance fees, our citizens would be able to keep more of their hard-earned money during difficult economic times.

Please explore the links in the footnotes below to learn about universal health care systems.