

What's really in the Massachusetts Health Reform Bill ...
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SPECIAL INTERESTS DOOM MASSACHUSETTS HEALTH CARE REFORM BILL

Merrick, New York, April 10, 2006 - "You have to wonder why the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's legislature and Governor Mitt Romney would pass a health care reform bill that:

- 1) requires its citizens to purchase private health insurance products sold for a profit and that treats patients the same way it does cars[1];
- 2) lacks specificity - the State has yet to write language creating a sliding scale of affordability and relies on new products not yet released by insurance companies[2];
- 3) requires employers that don't pay for coverage to pay a fine of only \$295 per year per employee - a token provision [3]. Currently, employers that do provide health insurance coverage spend at least ten times that amount for their employees in the state and
- 4) is not a solution for one of the most complex and perplexing socio-economic problems facing the United States-- the outrageous rising cost of health care services.

The Bill does little to address the underlying causes of skyrocketing health care costs in Massachusetts - billions of dollars spent on layers of wasteful administrative duplication and government bureaucracy, rather than patient care." stated Tom Garvey, Chairman, Board of Directors, The Center for Health Care Policy Research and Analysis, an organization committed to resolving the uninsured problem and preventing the thousands of premature deaths of uninsured Americans that occur each year.

Mr. Garvey further stated, "The Massachusetts legislation appears to be an example of the executive and the legislative branches of state government cooperating with insurance and HMO lobbyists to prevent effective health care financing reform from developing.

The excessive influence of special interests, led by health insurance, hospital system, and employer-organization lobbyists, effectively halted passage of a funding mechanism that would have been more equitable and sustainable for the citizens of Massachusetts."

Furthermore, Mr. Garvey stated, " What will this legislation actually accomplish? It will:

- 1) neutralize and STOP meaningful health care reform initiatives in the state;
- 2) take the political pressure off the state politicians by stopping an intended ballot initiative on financing reform that calls for a 5-7% payroll tax and 60 cent cigarette tax increase and

3) provide a huge increase of taxpayer dollars funneled to the insurers and HMOs.

Unfortunately, this is not Universal Health Care or even Health Care Financing Reform, it is simply a diversion and subversion of vital public policy dollars that will eventually harm the 637,000[4] uninsured state of Massachusetts residents and 45 million uninsured Americans[5]."

We must stop death by uninsurance and health industry profiteering.

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[1] Mass Bill Requires Health Coverage, Washington Post Staff Writer, David A. Fahrenthold, April 5, 2006

[2] Massachusetts Sets Health Plan for Nearly All, NY Times, Pam Belluck, April 5, 2006

[3] The Good and Bad for America in Massachusetts' New Universal Health Care Model, The Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights (FTCR), April 5, 2006

[4] Insuring America's Health: Principles and Recommendations, Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies, January 2004, Table A.3, Distribution of Uninsured Population, Under 65 and Probabilities of Going Without Coverage, By State of Residence, 2002, page 166.

[5] U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, Economics and Statistics Administration, Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2003, Figure 6. Number Uninsured and Uninsured Rate: 1987 to 2003, Page 17, Issued August 2004.