



Jackson Groves/Index

State Rep. Rebecca McClanahan, D-Kirkville, (left) describes a comprehensive state health care policy, proposed by the House of Representatives Democratic Caucus, at Northeast Regional Medical Center on Wednesday morning. Pictured with McClanahan are Reps. Judy Baker, D-Columbia and Tom Shively, D-LaPlata.

Democrats announce plans for new health care bills

BY JESSIE GASCH
Managing Editor

Fifteen hundred northeast Missourians in the next five years might regain the health care access they lost when Medicaid coverage was cut, state Rep. Rebecca McClanahan, D-Kirkville, said Wednesday.

McClanahan, accompanied by several other lawmakers, announced at Northeast Regional Medical Center a plan to restore cuts to Medicaid, create a state Health Policy Authority and add requirements to schools to offer exercise and physical education, among other objectives.

The proposal, which has the support of the Missouri Democratic Caucus, is a part of the caucus' 2008 legislative agenda, dubbed Moving Missouri Forward.

"We're here today at a hospital, instead of in front of a Jiffy Lube, which is where the governor rolled out his health care plan," said Rep. Judy Baker, D-Columbia. "... [The Medicaid cut] has led to widespread and predictable, completely predictable, burdens on our neighborhood hospitals."

Baker cited evidence of the growing number of uninsured Missourians, which has risen at three times the rate of the national average. She said 180,000 low-income Missourians lost medical

care access when some Medicaid funding was discontinued. The Democratic Caucus wants to reverse the effects of the cut, Baker said.

"We can't do it all today, and we can't do it maybe even all tomorrow, but we have a plan to get us there in five years," she said. "Job No. 1 is to restore the cuts."

House Minority Leader Paul LeVota, D-Independence, said a health care policy called Insure Missouri, initially proposed by Gov. Matt Blunt (see Oct. 4 issue of the Index), would be inadequate.

"Approaching election year, the governor has proposed a plan that gives Missouri taxpayer money away to private companies that does nothing, that does nothing to restore coverage for children, the disabled or the elderly," LeVota said. "[We have a] clear alternative that will help, especially in rural Missouri."

State Rep. Tom Shively, D-LaPlata, said rural hospitals shoulder a disproportionate burden of unpaid medical bills. He compared the \$7-million to \$8-million deficit at Northeast Regional Medical Center to the \$10 million deficit at Truman Medical Center in Kansas City, Mo., a much larger institution.

In Adair County, Medicaid enrollment has fallen from 4,046 to 3,224

people, according to a press release issued Wednesday.

As part of the Democratic Caucus agenda, Baker will introduce legislation to establish a Health Policy Authority, a centralized, quasi-governmental body to deal with health issues, the lawmakers said Wednesday.

She drew attention Wednesday to the state's \$320-million surplus. "We are leaving money in the bank while not paying our bills," Baker said. "The state of Missouri has not paid its bills in health care."

Rep. Mike Talbot, D-Kansas City, also introduced his plan to impose regulations on medical-record privacy. Currently there are no state laws that address health privacy, Talbot said.

"The information that's discussed [at doctor's offices] is much more important than probably anything else you're going to do on a day-to-day basis," he said.

LeVota said legislators will formally introduce the measures in December.

Audience members questioned the lawmakers' ability to muster bipartisan support and to justify the high cost of the proposals.

McClanahan proposed an amendment to the MO HealthNet bill supported by Gov. Blunt last year. The amendment, which failed, would have restored health care coverage to 180,000 people and cost the state more than \$150 million.

Students should hear conflicting views, some say

BY DIANE POELKER
Assistant News Editor

Learning on a college campus isn't limited to the classroom.

Missouri House Bill 213 has drawn Truman administrators' attention to the issue of ideological diversity in the classroom (see the Oct. 11 issue of the Index). But controversy might extend beyond class work and lecture to extra-credit assignments such as attending a forum perceived to support a political or religious agenda.

Adam Davis, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said such topical forums present opportunities for learning and represent creative teaching tactics.

"One of the best things we've got at Truman are creative teachers who make use of the opportunities that the world presents to them without warning," Davis said. "... An education that offends no one is likely to be a non-education. No educational institution can promise you that

you will not be exposed to ideas that you find uncomfortable or objectionable or that are opposed to the ideas that you came in with."

Davis said that although HB 213 is no longer circulating in the Missouri Legislature, a Faculty Senate committee has begun to investigate intellectual diversity on Truman's campus (see Oct. 11 Index). Davis said that although the committee has not yet reached a final recommendation to return to Senate, members are concerned with clarifying university-wide procedures for reporting viewpoint discrimination.

"You certainly want to have conditions where a student can say, 'Why do we have to do this for a grade?'" Davis said. "The professor should be in a position to say, 'This is the learning outcome I hope to achieve as a result of you going to this event.' ... If a student feels that a grade has been awarded unjustly and can demonstrate that and document it, there is a chain of command that needs to happen. ... The Vice President of Academic Affairs would be the final court of appeal."

Some students said most professors remain objective in their grading practices when a student's viewpoint conflicts with their own.

Junior Tyler Menz said he understands the value of challenging stu-

dents' ideological perspectives in the classroom and through opinionated out-of-class forums but that problems arise when a professor cannot withhold personal bias.

"In the only political science class I took here, I felt my conflicting viewpoint was reflected in my grade," Menz said. "But usually [the expression of opinion by a professor] is not a problem because I agree with them."

Junior Whitey Holt said some professors give the option of alternative assignments to combat the issue of viewpoint discrimination.

"I can understand where people might feel [a professor's opinion] is a conflict of interest," Holt said. "I would have a problem if a professor didn't give other options for people with opposing views."

Marc Becker, associate professor of history, said in an e-mail interview that he does not hesitate to express his views on political issues in class discussion. In 2006, author

David Horowitz featured Becker as one of America's 101 most dangerous professors because of Becker's political stances on Latin American politics. However, Becker said he is not very concerned about making students uncomfortable.

"Professors who refuse to state their positions do their students a disservice," Becker said. "I want [students] to develop their own thoughts. I think the best way to encourage students to do that is for the instructor to model how we form our own ideas and perspectives. ... Learning happens at points of tension."

Becker said he opposes giving students extra credit for attending forums outside of class but that he does encourage attendance when topical issues present themselves.

He said the possibility of forcing students to take his point of view to complete a class assignment makes him uncomfortable but that a project working with immigrant workers in Milan, Mo., might potentially discriminate against certain viewpoints.

"What if someone in the class is a xenophobic racist who hates brown people?" Becker said. "It would be hard for such a person to complete the class assignment. But isn't part of a liberal arts education challenging xenophobic racist ideas? ... If we never get out of our comfort zones, we will never learn."

"An education that offends no one is likely to be a non-education."

Adam Davis
Associate Dean of the
College of Arts and
Sciences
Consultant



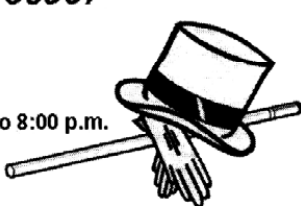
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