

Rep. Huntley – Health Reform Strategy

Our health care system is in a crisis. Responsible employers around the state and country can no longer afford to offer health coverage to their employees. Even employees lucky enough to have coverage can barely afford to use it.

In Minnesota, the building blocks for progressive reform were identified two years ago. A broad coalition of supporters came together to advocate legislation that would have set Minnesota down the path of promoting quality care, reducing health care costs and achieving universal coverage. Those same provisions are now being discussed at the federal level as part of a national effort to reform the health care delivery system. A comprehensive solution will require federal action and partnership with states.

As discussions at the federal level advance regarding national solutions to the health care problem, it is important that the state and federal delegations work together to build on Minnesota's strengths and the work achieved last year.

The consequences of doing nothing will leave us with an impossible situation. We must begin to change the fragmented system we have into a system that works. This is a unique opportunity to make a difference; a point in time that will be brief.

Below are a series of initiatives I have coordinated to generate vocal support for federal reform. Each piece has two goals: promote a community discussion about the impact on the care delivery system in Minnesota and activate grassroots efforts to generate support for federal reform among our Congressional delegation.

It is important to note that these efforts supplement on-going efforts by outside organizations on the issue.

Thursday stakeholder meetings

Started in June, I lead weekly discussions around federal health reform efforts to engage Minnesota's health care community. The meetings are open and informally structured to promote a healthy dialogue, promote coalitions of support, and allow individuals to ask questions. Attendance has varied from 20-40 individuals representing a cross-section of the health care community in the state.

Health Reform Tour

During the second half of July and the first half of August, the Speaker of the House, other State Legislators and I will tour provider systems to discuss the federal reform efforts and hear from the public about what they would like to see included in the legislation. Dates and locations are still being finalized.

Federal Delegation Meetings

A series of meetings with members of Minnesota's federal delegation is being arranged with state legislators to discuss the state-specific needs for health reform legislation. These meetings will follow on two prior meetings on the need for federal health reform held at the beginning of this year. We are also trying to work with our federal delegation to arrange joint community meetings.

Media Strategy

Working with our media staff, advocacy organizations and Health Committee state legislators, we are encouraging members and the general public to develop letters to the editor, editorials and other strategies to advocate for federal reform. Importantly, we want individuals to tell their story. We want to encourage a dialogue among neighbors, co-workers and families about the impact of reform on their lives.