

PRESS RELEASE



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Representative Storch Calls on Governor Blunt for Stronger Leadership on Healthcare Issues, Citing New Families USA Report

New Families USA report highlights Governor Blunt's failure to lead on healthcare.

JEFFERSON CITY—Representative Rachel Storch spoke out today against Governor Blunt's proposal to drastically cut the Missouri Medicaid program and an accompanying legislative proposal to ultimately end the program altogether. Representative Storch cited a new report issued by Families USA titled "Showdown in the Show-Me State: Governor Blunt vs. Medicaid."

"The Families USA report aptly points out that Governor Blunt's proposals on Medicaid would take Missouri from "middle-of-the-road" to the "bottom of the pack" when compared to other states," Storch said. "Under Governor Blunt's plan, more than 100,000 Missourians would lose their health coverage, including 15,000 elderly people and 24,000 children."

The Families USA report outlines Governor Blunt's Medicaid proposal, noting that the following groups will lose coverage altogether:

60,000 parents

15,000 seniors and people with disabilities

9,500 working people with disabilities

3,000 working Missourians with temporary disabilities

1,150 working Missourians who are leaving welfare

24,000 children on MC+ whose parents cannot afford premiums proposed under the Missouri Senate's plan.

Other proposed cuts would include:

Elimination of coverage for wheelchairs, prosthetic devices, and other medical equipment for most Medicaid enrollees

Elimination of vision services, hearing aids, and rehabilitative therapies for most Medicaid enrollees

Elimination of hospice care, even for the elderly and terminally ill

Elimination of emergency transportation for most Medicaid enrollees. (See Report, p.3)

"Governor Blunt should be trying to expand access to healthcare for more than 600,000 Missourians who have no health insurance – not trying to terminate healthcare for the elderly and our children," Storch said.

"Our governor has an obligation to lead," said Storch. "Yet, nearly four months into a five-month legislative session, he has shown us no plan to address the issue of Missouri's uninsured."

"In the meantime, the Missouri Senate has already passed legislation that would authorize the complete elimination of our state's healthcare care safety net in 2008." (See SB 539.)

“The data is clear: terminating healthcare coverage will create new expenses for people with health insurance,” Storch said. (Report, p.7) “Most Missourians already struggle with the high costs of private health insurance. We need our Governor to find ways to lower our healthcare costs, not raise them,” said Storch.

The proposed cuts to Medicaid will impact Missouri’s economy heavily. The Families USA report notes the Missouri Medicaid program “stimulat[es] business activity and creat[es] new jobs.” (Report, p.7) The Report cites a study conducted by the St. Louis University Business School, which found that in 2004, Missouri Medicaid supported nearly 80,000 jobs and provided Missourians with \$2.8 billion in income and wages. (Report, p.7)

“Medicaid funds support Missouri hospitals, doctors, nurses, and other nursing homes.” Governor Blunt’s proposed cuts, along with the legislative push to end Medicaid, will devastate the healthcare industry in Missouri,” Storch said. “These cuts do not support the “business-friendly” climate that Governor Blunt hopes to create. They simply do not make economic sense.”

“I call on Governor Blunt to give Missourians a common-sense plan that will lower costs and expand access to quality healthcare,” Storch said. “Cutting healthcare for the poor is an inappropriate answer to the challenge of providing Missourians with a quality healthcare program.”

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