

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Brad

September 10, 2009

Hoaglund

(208)

342-5434

Responsible Health Care Reform

By Senator Jim Risch

As the health care debate took shape this summer it became clear to me Idahoans did not want government-run health care. Every day people called, wrote and e-mailed asking me to vote against a government takeover and any public option. As I traveled throughout Idaho in August, I heard the same thing—no government-run health care. I wholeheartedly agree.

I heard complaints about our current system and that some reform is needed, but time and again, Idahoans told me we must know the consequences of any proposal before it is enacted.

It was disappointing to hear the President push, once again, for a government takeover and a public option when he addressed Congress and America. I cannot support the goal he and the liberal members of his party have, which is the takeover of America's health care system. The President's speech had some ideas we all agree could reform health care, but he has not delivered a specific bill with details of how to accomplish those reforms.

If we want reform, there are four things we must do: 1.) Start over. The reform bills being considered by Congress must be scrapped due to their vagueness and lack of understandability; 2.) Go slow. Health care reform is complex and affects every American. We must get it right, not quick; 3.) We need to understand each component of health care reform. We cannot get it done in one big bill with a bureaucracy writing the details; and 4.) We must know the consequences of changes made to health care. It is too important to leave to chance or hope.

So, what should be done to reform health care? I urge:

- Wellness Initiatives – individuals need to be responsible for their health. A substantial percentage of health costs are incurred due to personal habits.
- Tax Credits for Individuals – those who purchase their own insurance should receive the same benefit as those who have company-sponsored health plans.

- Pool Small Businesses Together to Purchase Insurance – a larger pool of people reduces risks, spreads costs and lowers premiums.
- Electronic Medical Records and E-prescriptions – improve safety and eliminate duplicate testing.
- Portability – allow employees to move plans from job to job and across state lines.
- State Health Insurance Information Centers – Allows comparison of benefits and premiums of plans in an easy-to-understand format.
- Get Treatments Right the First Time – medical mistakes harm thousands of people each year. The airlines have a zero tolerance of error for obvious reasons. The medical industry should do the same, which would lower tort and all costs.
- Divert Routine Medical Visits from Emergency Rooms - using less expensive clinics for routine health care would reduce costs.
- Initiatives to Fight the Five Medical Conditions that Consume 75 Percent of Health Care Spending - coronary artery disease, diabetes, congestive heart failure, asthma and depression.

We can and must improve the delivery of affordable health care in America. It won't be easy, but it is time to get to work