



Reid Hospital & Health Care Services

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Reid About Value

National Health Care Policy

November 2007

Dear Community Leader:

Although we are a year away from the national election, health care policy has already begun to take center stage. I am hopeful that there will be meaningful discussion among the candidates and thoughtful consideration by the voters. I say this because our country is in desperate need of a thoughtful, articulated and agreed upon approach to health care for our citizens. Said another way, we have no such consensus at the moment.

We have a hodge-podge or patch-work quilt of various programs and systems that leave 46+ million of our fellow Americans out of the loop. We can't even say that our "system" is broken, because we truly have no "system" to begin with.

Unlike virtually every other economically advanced nation, the United States has separate systems for the delivery, payment and funding of health care services. In presentations throughout the community and before a variety of groups, I have maintained that the current direction of health care in the United States is not sustainable. It is riddled with unfairness and faulty logic at every level.

Many would think that our country has the best health care in the world. But that is myth. The fact is that among economically developed countries, America ranks in the middle or lower half in most health indicators. What is really true is that some of us do have the best care in the world, but others have sub-standard or no care. Another myth is that Americans have cost-effective health care. The fact is that America spends more per capita than any other economically developed nation on health care. Yes, it's true. Americans spend more and get less.

There are several forces that I believe are on a collision course. They are:

- Medicare/ Medicaid shortfall in funding
- Explosion of costly technology
- Tidal wave of baby-boomer demand
- 47 million and growing uninsured
- Inability of payers to fill the gap
- Astronomically priced pharmaceuticals
- High cost of chronic care
- Aging of the population

As a nation we must decide whether health care is a consumer product (like a television, car or iPod) or is it a basic human service (like police protection or education)? The former calls for a free market approach. The latter calls for a societal response.

While the candidates, the pundits and officeholders wrangle about where health care should be, community hospitals like Reid continue to be the safety net or lifeline for this "non-system" of care. But, the lifeline is fraying when you factor in the increasing cost of and demand for technology and the aging population.

Perhaps we all need to thoughtfully ask ourselves two questions:

1. What do you want, need and desire... for yourself and your loved ones?
2. How willing are you to fund those same things for others?

Sincerely,

Barry S. MacDowell
President