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Inglis in Greer tonight for healthcare talks

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U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis (R-SC) presented his ideas for how to change the national healthcare system when he met with Simpsonville residents at Bryson Elementary School Tuesday night as one stop on his healthcare tour and fact-finding mission across the Upstate.

Inglis' tour continues tonight when he stops in Greer at Greer Public Works, 301 McCall St., for a public meeting set to start at 7 p.m.

Among other changes, Inglis said that reinsuring the most costly medical cases could cut down on costly premiums for more-healthy individuals. That could cut costs dramatically while providing better access to healthcare to middle class and working poor who can't afford coverage under the current system.

"If you can control cost, you can expand access," Inglis told the crowd, as he presented figures showing that the United States lags behind other developed nations in three major areas: cost, quality and access.

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He proposed his reinsurance plan where the government would cover the most costly cases such as cancer treatment and serious chronic illnesses, in effect splitting the cost among taxpayers.

Inglis expected some support on his reinsurance plan if brought before the House. He credited Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) with proposing the reinsurance idea in his 2004 presidential bid and said he hoped that the presidential campaigns would focus on healthcare reform this time around.

"I think we will get a big debate about healthcare and I think it will be good for the country to go through that debate," Inglis said. "Part of what this tour is all about is getting ready for that debate."

Inglis listened to ideas from locals on possible changes to the healthcare system after he'd presented several "what ifs" that he'd like to see accomplished. First on that list was his goal for every citizen to be covered by insurance.

Other changes included setting insurance so that no year's illness could wipe out a family's savings by in turn paying more for cost of smaller illnesses; covering costs for preventative care such as physicals, weight control programs and smoking cessation; lower premiums for non-smokers and fit people; and moving non-emergency emergency room visits to a 24/7 clinic either on site at a hospital or in communities.

"Those are the initial solutions that I'm pursuing in the course of this," Inglis said.

Inglis stopped at Bryson as one part of a 75 stop tour through medical facilities, community groups and insurance company offices as he gathers information on how healthcare is delivered and paid for in the Upstate and to get ideas about possible solutions. He also wanted to “gain a deeper understanding of the real world that people are facing.”

Residents told of doubling costs of prescription drugs, injuries that insurance companies called pre-existing conditions and high costs for small business owners to insure employees.

Some offered solutions such as having the government negotiate costs with insurance companies then offering those prices to individuals. Others wanted to see healthcare insurance tied to an individual, not through their workplace.

Inglis called his plans “aspirational goals” and welcomed the input.
