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## Inglis' health-care tour hits Simpsonville

Lawmaker presents ideas for changing national system

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U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis, R-S.C., presented his ideas for how to change the national health-care system when he met with Simpsonville residents at Bryson Elementary School March 17, one stop on his health-care tour and fact-finding mission across the Upstate.

Among other changes, Inglis said 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 health care 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.

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 it's brought before the House. He credited Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., with proposing the reinsurance idea in his 2004 presidential bid and said he hoped that the presidential campaigns would focus on health-care reform this time around.

"I think we will get a big debate about health care, 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 health-care 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 the cost of minor illnesses. Also, covering costs for preventative care such as physicals, weight control programs and smoking cessation were cited, as was lower premiums for non-smokers and fit people. He also recommended 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 health care is delivered and paid for in the Upstate and to get ideas about possible solutions.

He said 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 health-care insurance tied to an individual, not through their workplace.

Inglis called his plans "aspirational goals" and welcomed the input.

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