

## Other Elected Officials

### **Congressman Pete Sessions (Texas)**

#### *Congressman Sessions Calls Executive Order a Major Step Forward*

Today, the momentum behind health care price transparency continues to increase across the country, and policy-makers in Washington are listening. In August, President Bush took a major step forward in providing consumers with easy-to-use information about the quality, price, and value of their health care by signing an Executive Order to help increase the transparency of America's health care system.

The Executive Order, entitled [Promoting Quality and Efficient Health Care in Federal Government Administered or Sponsored Health Care Programs](#), recognizes that in order to spend their health care dollars wisely, Americans need information about doctors, hospitals, and costs.

Greater transparency in health care pricing will create opportunities to improve care and lower costs by supporting those doctors and hospitals that deliver high-quality care and avoid unnecessary health care costs.

### **Congressman Paul Ryan (Wisconsin)**

#### *Congressman Ryan Says Transparency Will Arm Health Care Consumers with Facts They Need*

In order to make informed health care decisions, patients and their families need access to accurate, up-to-date, easy-to-understand information about health care providers' prices and quality of care. The President's recent directive helps move us toward realizing this goal. By requiring federal programs to open up and share their price and quality information with beneficiaries, the government can help ensure that more health care consumers are armed with the facts they need to get the best quality care, while lowering costs at the same time.

### **Assemblyman Eric Munoz, M.D (New Jersey)**

#### *Assemblyman Munoz Notes Transparency Order Will Help Minorities Gain Better Access to Health Care*

Patients need to have access to information to allow them to make good decisions about their medical care. President Bush's executive order will encourage transparency in the health care industry and help families and senior citizens to save money while ensuring the highest quality of health care.

The President's efforts will help minorities gain better access to health care than before.

New Jersey has already taken steps to bring transparency to our health care industry regarding HMO's, nursing homes and hospitals. A partnership with the federal

government without any doubt will bring greater transparency for the people of New Jersey."

**Mayor Johnny Ford (Tuskegee, Alabama)**

*Tuskegee Mayor applauds new health care transparency executive order*

Everyone is a health care consumer and should be treated with honesty and respect, With the creation of transparency through widespread public reporting, individuals now have the tools to find the best health care for their loved ones and themselves. As the mayor of Tuskegee and the founder of the World Conference of Mayors Incorporated, I will continue to work alongside the efforts of our federal partners to give the power of informed choice to our citizens.

In order to spend their health care dollars wisely, our citizens need to know their options in advance, know the quality of doctors and hospitals in their area, and know what procedures will cost,

For instance, when Americans buy new cars, they have access to consumer research on safety, reliability, price, and performance – and they should be able to expect the same when they purchase health care.

I support the federal government's efforts to ensure that the health care industry become more transparent, less complex for the average citizen and more easily understood by the very people it is here to serve,

We understand this is not the final step in ensuring that consumers know what they're buying when they get health care, but it is an important step.

**State Representative Kris Steele (Oklahoma)**

If you give Oklahomans solid information, they will make good decisions about the services and products they purchase as health care consumers

President Bush's action will encourage transparency in the health care industry and help families make informed decisions based on the costs and the quality of the services they receive.

Before you buy a car, you can research every vehicle's safety, reliability, price, and performance,

Oklahomans should have the same kind of information available when it comes to evaluating doctors and hospitals, but for too long that data has been hidden from public view. I believe President Bush's order is an important action that will benefit health care consumers.

**State Representative Jodie Laubenberg (Texas)**

Two weeks ago President Bush signed an Executive Order mandating more transparency in federal health care.

As Vice Chairman of Public Health for the State of Texas, I applaud the President's action and hope that the State of Texas will soon adopt similar legislation. Coming from the highest office in the nation, this order will no doubt have a very positive affect on federally administered health care programs.

The order will allow Americans to "comparison shop" for their health care by requiring providers to release information regarding quality of care and price points for common procedures.

Health care costs have been, at best, murky and confusing for far too long. Anything that the government can do to help consumers have a better understanding of cost, and the ability to compare costs, will both improve health care and, ultimately, bring the cost of quality care down to a more reasonable level.

This order directs federal agencies to share information with beneficiaries regarding the quality of services offered by health care providers. I believe the public has the right to know what the qualifications and reputation of their health care providers might be. They should be able to easily obtain information regarding quality of care issues when selecting a doctor in order to ensure they will get the most capable care possible.

The President's recent order also encourages the adoption of Health Information Technology Standards to better facilitate the expedient exchange of health information. This portion of the order would allow patients to receive vital care more readily by quickening the transfer of medical records to and from doctors, hospitals and insurers.

In this age of technological advancement it is vital that health care providers and insurers make better use of new methods to improve patient care. This includes record keeping and file sharing between involved parties, it will not conflict with Health Information Privacy and Protection Act (HIPPA) and privacy laws. To have a patient suffer because their new doctor or hospital cannot obtain information regarding the patient's medical history is inexcusable.

Beneficiaries of federally subsidized health care, from federal employees to Medicare beneficiaries, comprise one quarter of all Americans covered by health insurance. Though this directive is focused on federal health care patients and facilitators, it can benefit the population as a whole. As state legislators we need to bring this transparency down to the state level.

The entire purpose of the President's order is to make health care work more efficiently and transparently for the average American. This order will not raise taxes and does not increase federal funding for health care; it is simply an encouragement for all providers to look after the best interests of the consumer.

Health care issues are a continuing battle for all Americans. It is imperative that we work together to develop a system that will benefit both patients and providers to ensure that all citizens continue to have the best health care possible in their hours of need.

**Executive Ron Sims (King County, Washington)**

A public comparison report gives patients and employers a powerful tool for choosing health care. It gives providers a powerful tool to improve the care we get.

We welcome federal government support in creating comparison reports. Federal health plan data will make the reports more robust and ultimately more useful for patients, employers and providers.

**Sen. Jim Jensen, chairman of the Iowa Health and Human Services Committee (Nebraska)**

As the Chairman of the Health and Human Service Committee of the Nebraska Legislature, I am writing in support of President Bush's Executive Order to broaden transparency in health care. The Executive Order will provide consumers with valuable information about the price of health care and the quality of health care that they are receiving.

The Executive Order makes it possible for consumers to have complete access to their health care and make selections based on their own personal needs, while keeping unnecessary health care cost to a minimum. Several programs including Medicare, Department of Defense health programs, Veterans Affairs Administration and Federal Health Benefits Program will all benefit from this Executive Order by increasing the quality of health care and cost information for consumers.

I am pleased to offer my support for President' Bush's Executive Order. I believe that it will greatly improve the quality of health care for consumers. Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

**Rep. Linda Upmeyer, chairwoman of the Iowa House Human Resources Committee (Iowa)**

I want to offer my support for President Bush's executive order relating to improving healthcare. This is a tremendous step forward on an issue that is critical to Iowans.

As a person who has spent my career providing healthcare to Iowans, I have seen the transformation in how we provide care. While our ability to provide ever more heroic care for older and sicker patients has increased, the ability of patients and providers to understand the cost of care has not kept pace. Additionally, we know that more tests and procedures do not necessarily equal high quality. I want to thank the President for placing an emphasis on encouraging Americans to be educated consumers of healthcare. This is a win-win for providers and patients, and will help control the cost of healthcare.

This spring, the Iowa Legislature created an Electronic Health Care Records System Task Force. This group will create a state plan for developing and implementing a system of electronic health records that all Iowans would be able to use. As we begin this work, I am encouraged by the emphasis that President Bush and yourself have put behind this effort at the national level. The executive order's push toward expanding the use of next-generation health information technology is critical to persuading healthcare providers to invest in these technologies. I believe the efforts of the federal government will help

states like Iowa establish their systems and allow Americans to receive quality healthcare anywhere in the United States, and someday, anywhere in the world.

Rewarding quality healthcare and expecting greater transparency are laudable goals, and ones I wholeheartedly support. Thank you to President Bush and to you for such forward-thinking leadership.

**Sen. Maggie Tinsman, co-chairman of the Iowa Health and Human Services Appropriation Sub-Committee (Iowa)**

I would like to add my strong support to that of others for President George W. Bush's Executive Order aimed at bringing transparency to America's health care system. Public reporting of pricing and quality of services and the promotion of health information technology are critical to every American's health and well being. I know that you have been promoting this kind of consumer access to health care cost and quality information for some time, so I appreciate your strong advocacy in this matter.

As Co-Chair of Iowa's Health & Human Services Appropriation Sub-Committee, I have been working for years to provide all Iowans with an opportunity to receive quality health care at the lowest cost possible. We have been working with private insurance companies as well as local, state, and federal government agencies to improve access, to promote quality, and to encourage cost effective care for all Iowans.

The Iowa Medicaid program has initiated a number of efforts over the past 3 years to make the program more transparent to members and providers. Nearly all fees, payment rates, and costs are published on the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise (IME) website, including all fees and rates paid for all individual medical services, and all payment rates for individual prescription drugs. Further, the Iowa Medicaid program is administered through performance based, fixed price contracts. The IME has over 200 performance measures reported each quarter on its operations, also published on the website.

Lastly, Iowa entered into the Sovereign States Multi-State Drug Purchasing Pool. Iowa specifically chose this pool because all of the rebates, payment rates, and finances of the managing entity are entirely transparent to the member states. Other state pools are operated by Pharmacy Benefit Managers where the rebates and prices are hidden from the states.

Iowa is looking forward to additional transparency through our partnership with the federal government, namely the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Providing consumers health care options and choice among health providers based on value and quality care is the desire of all Iowans. I commend you and the President for this kind of leadership.

**Sen. James Seymour, co-chairman of the Iowa Senate Human Resources Committee (Iowa)**

The President's executive order to increase the transparency of America's Health Care System will empower Americans to find better value and better care

Iowans' applaud the President for his commitment to creating value based competition in Health Care, which in turn will strengthen the marketplace for health care consumerism. The President's executive order will have a positive impact on the cost and quality of care provided to Americans.

Iowa health care providers are at the forefront of providing meaningful consumer information with the continuous goal of providing efficient and effective outcomes for all patients. Everyone is a health care consumer. With the creation of transparency through wide spread public reporting, consumers will have the tools to find the best health care for their loved ones and themselves.

Iowa will continue to work alongside the efforts of our federal partners to give the power of informed choice to our citizens.

### **Iowa Health Buyers Alliance**

*Letter from Labor Chair Garth Bowen and Management Chair Jon-Scott Johnson to Secretary Leavitt*

The Iowa Health Buyers Alliance (IHBA) strongly supports Federal efforts to advance transparency in America's health care system. The recent Federal health care information directives firmly cement the Federal government's commitment to do so.

The IHBA is a labor/management association of health purchasers who have come together to identify, evaluate, recommend and provide access to cost-effective high performance policies, practices, providers, and products for its members. Through our membership, we represent a very significant number and percentage of Iowans. Included in our membership are numerous cities and towns, labor organizations, private employers and state government.

We recognize the importance of leveraging and supporting national resources such as the Consumer/Purchaser Disclosure Project, the National Quality Forum, The Leapfrog Group and similar efforts. These groups like ours, in turn, recognize the central role of the Federal government.

The Federal efforts to advance transparency are absolutely essential. The recent directives are an important step forward toward our vision for a transparent health care system in which quality and cost are measured, reported and rewarded. It is a pivotal time for consumers and purchasers to be involved in shaping the agenda in partnership with the Federal government. We very much support your efforts and recognize that we must all step-up and join these efforts to achieve success.

### **St. Louis Regional Health Commission**

*Letter from Chief Executive Officer Robert Freund, Jr. to Secretary Mike Leavitt*

I am writing on behalf of the St. Louis Regional Health Commission to support the Federal government's efforts through the Department of Health and Human Services to increase transparency in the U. S. health care system.

The Commission's mission is to improve access to health care, reduce health disparities, and improve health outcomes in the St. Louis region. Various organizations are represented in our network including: Saint Louis City and County, the State of Missouri, area hospitals and medical schools, primary and specialty clinics, neighborhood and faith-based organizations, community members, area health foundations, Federal officials, and health consortiums. In addition to the nineteen-member Commission, the Commission has two thirty-member advisory boards. One represents community organizations, citizens and users of the safety net system and the other consists of health service providers in the region.

In the Commission's strategic plan submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in October 2003, the Commission and its Advisory Boards unanimously agreed that improved health literacy in our community was a vital component to building a healthier St. Louis. Providing consumers with the information and tools to make informed, healthy decisions about their lifestyle and how they obtain health care services is critical to improving the health of our community.

As we move forward with these initiatives, we believe that it is important that such initiatives promote better quality health care, reduce variability within our institutions, and improve access to health care for all. One of the hallmarks of the work to date in St. Louis through the Commission has been the collaboration among patients and providers to build a better health care system in our region. We believe that initiatives to increase transparency, while essential, should build upon the collaborations already established, and not promote adversarial relationships between payers, providers, and consumers. We also believe such initiatives should be based on statistically sound methodologies that promote clinically meaningful metrics, and account for patient acuity, co-morbidities, and other complexities inherent in treating patients served by the safety net institutions in our community. Through the adherence to these important principles, we believe significant improvements are possible in delivering high quality care and empowering individuals to make responsible decisions about their health, and we appreciate the Department's efforts to lead this initiative at this time.

We appreciate the partnership between the Federal government and the St. Louis community over the past five years, and look forward to continuing our work together to build a healthier community.