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LETTER TO THE EDITOR Citizen Concerns and the Health Care Debate

They say that all politics is local, and even the raging debate over health care policy in Washington is proving this adage true. With the torrent of emails and phone calls over the last several days from concerned citizens such as you, I felt prompted to respond to the growing frustration and outrage over the news coming out of our national government in Washington.

I have heard from many senior citizens who are worried about the health care policy proposals coming from Washington. They ask what they'll do if they have a costly or chronic condition, and if they'll be able to get good care—or any care. They fear the idea of long waits and lower quality care, as characterize so many other government-run health care systems around the world. People from Canada and European countries travel here for their care—where will we go, people ask, when our system is just like those that drive other people here? Moreover, they are dismayed that non-governmental organizations like AARP prominently support the plans coming out of Washington. In sum, they want their concerns heard and their interests known.

Other citizens are rightfully frustrated with the overbearing nature of government, as exemplified by the health care issue. People tell me of their increased agitation every time they turn on the news or pick up a paper. It's always about the health care proposals, and it's never what they want to hear. They ask how, as they are forced to tighten their belts and watch their pocketbooks, the government in Washington can force on us a health care policy we do not want and cannot afford.

The great thing about democracy and republican government is that you really do have a voice. State government can be a driver of the public interest, and can serve to signal the national government what the true desires of the people are. Moreover, state government is the government close to the people, and as your representative I share a sense of sameness and closeness to be able to better understand your needs. For these very reasons, the current issue of health care is one better handled at the state level, and it is my goal to do so this coming session.

Politics is local, and it is also personal. We can make our voice heard, our interests known, and together we can achieve what Minnesotan's truly desire.

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