

## **State Representative Peggy Scott**

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### **LETTER TO THE EDITOR III Effects of Congress' Health Care Bill**

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To the Editor,

Now that a health care bill has passed the House of Representatives in Washington, the need to look at the details of the legislation and how it will effect Minnesota is all the more important. HR 3962 amounts to a consolidation of power by the federal government and a diminished ability for states to develop and implement their own health care reforms. As a citizen of Minnesota, this is nothing but angering-we are a leader in health care and health care reform, but now we are faced with the specter of a "one-size fits all" federal government takeover at our doorstep.

#### Expansion of Medicaid

HR 3962 expands the Medicaid program and places an added burden on states. A study by the Heritage Foundation shows that Minnesota would see its Medicaid rolls grow 22.1%. What's more, the expanded Medicaid eligibility puts people who are otherwise healthy-and who would be better off with subsidies or premium assistance programs-on welfare. We already cannot afford the public programs we have, and more Medicaid spending only means added strain on the system and the crowding out of other priorities. We need safety-net health care, but growing that safety net beyond its reasonable bounds dilutes focus from the people who need it most and raises costs for everyone else.

#### Penalized for Being Ahead

Proponents of the bill in Washington tout that the federal government will cover 100% of the Medicaid expansion-but this is for new coverages only. Because Minnesota has already created programs to cover the groups not previously eligible for Medicaid, we will have to maintain our current level of effort and comply with the new program requirements, all without receiving the same amount of matching funds as other states. We will lose the ability to tailor our pubic programs to the needs and priorities of our state. We will go from leader to lapdog, leashed to the post of federal mandates no matter how hard we pull.

#### Punishing Minnesota's Medical Leaders

The bill passed by the House not only burdens our state government, but also punishes our nation-leading hospitals, doctors, and med-tech companies. The bill places a tax of \$20 billion on medical device manufacturers like Medtronic, which could lead to job losses here in Minnesota where many of these companies are located. The bill also does not alleviate the disparities in how the federal government reimburses doctors and hospitals treating patients on Medicare and Medicaid. Our providers achieve higher-quality care at lower costs than other states, yet we are penalized for our success.

#### Trampling Our Freedom

The most troublesome aspect of HR3962 is its trampling of our personal freedom. The bill imposes mandates on individual insurance coverage and requires most

businesses to provide health insurance. I recognize the importance of people having health insurance coverage; however, a government requirement to purchase health insurance is ineffective, bureaucratic, and costly. Health care is of great personal importance to each of us, and we must have the freedom to choose our own health care insurance and providers and pay directly for those services.

As I've discussed, Minnesota is a leader in health care and health care reform, and we are leaps and bounds ahead of the federal government. Minnesota's 2008 health care reforms include cost transparency and savings measures, managed care policies, and quality incentives. This year, the Governor has announced initiatives that put more control in the hands of patients by giving us access to information and incentives to make good consumer decisions.

In the legislature, my colleagues and I are working on reforms including the Health Care Freedom Act, which would guarantee our freedom of choice in health care; medical malpractice reform, which would reduce medical liability insurance expenses and help lower costs for consumers; and public program reforms to improve quality, cost-efficiency, and sustainability. These reflect my desire for Minnesotans to have health care that is affordable, accessible, and of the highest quality. It is my hope that other officials and the citizens of this great state will not be content to let the federal government reach so far into our lives as HR 3962 provides. More than our health is at stake.

Sincerely,

Peggy Scott  
State Representative  
District 49A, Andover