

Legislative Objective

Health Care

Problem:

Health care costs continue to rise at paces far in excess of inflation, causing many employers to either reduce the benefits they provide to their employees, drop existing coverage, or refrain from purchasing new coverage. According to PriceWaterhouse Coopers medical costs will increase 9.6% in 2009 and 9.0% in 2010.

The high costs of health care coverage have a direct impact on the number of uninsured in the state, and an expensive health care market makes Washington unattractive to new and existing businesses who want to provide good benefits for their employees and compete in the world market. In 2006, the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care studied the problems unique to Washington and developed numerous recommendations to improve our system. While many of the recommendations were adopted, the Legislature has failed to move forward with recommendations that give individuals and families more choice in selecting private insurance plans that work for them.

Solution:

Health Care Reform

1. **Reduce costs.** Support proposals that reduce health care premiums and health care costs by encouraging innovation, more fully engaging technology, and increasing flexibility at all levels. Support medical malpractice reform to control excess costs and over utilization of services.
2. **Empower consumers.** Support proposals that increase health care data transparency and improve the information available to consumers as they make health care decisions. Restore choice to consumers that enables them to make decisions that meet their individual needs.
3. **Expand coverage.** Support proposals that restore affordability of coverage in the private market in order to meet the financial challenges of the uninsured.
4. **Focus on prevention and wellness.** Support efforts that encourage individuals to take responsibility for improving their overall health, participate in wellness programs and receive preventive screenings for early detection, and better manage chronic disease.

Reinvigorate the Private Market

1. Support proposals that stimulate an active and viable health care delivery market by encouraging increased competition, new entrants into the coverage market, innovation in coverage plans and benefit designs, and eliminating and streamlining regulatory provisions that stifle the market
2. Oppose measures that reduce or eliminate choice of health care product designs, increase regulation that restricts market activity, and unduly increases costs for purchasers
3. Oppose measures that establish government-run programs as competitors to the private market, provide an advantage for purchasers to purchase coverage through the government, and/or requires groups of purchasers to acquire coverage solely from the state

Small Group Market

1. Support more affordable benefit plans for small businesses and younger workers who are currently priced out of the market
2. Oppose efforts to limit or further regulate association health plans

State Mandates

1. Support proposals that require an actuarial review of all proposed mandates that evaluates whether implementation of the mandate makes improvements to health care outcomes throughout the system

2. Oppose employer and individual purchasing mandates and the development of a government-run health care system
3. Oppose mandates that increase costs
4. Oppose other regulatory restrictions that inhibit the ability of health insurers, providers and other system participants from utilizing market-based tools to control costs and increase access to coverage