

Vermont House Republicans

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Stability, Patient Rights, Access and Affordability

Montpelier, VT – During the last election cycle we heard loud and clear from Vermonters that they are not happy with the direction of Healthcare reform in Vermont. I believe that the governor was nearly defeated last November because of his unwavering defense of an idea, mismanagement of healthcare reform and Vermont Health Connect that to this day is still not functioning as promised.

We assured our constituents that if elected, we would offer alternatives to bring some stability, protect patient rights and choices, offer greater access and improve affordability. Today we offer a number of other bills with alternative approaches to achieve what we believe Vermonters are seeking. These are alternative ideas that we hope will be fully vetted by the majority. This work has been in progress for well over a year and is a bi-partisan approach to addressing these very serious concerns.

Over the past four years we Vermonters have watched, with increasing apprehension, as a powerful and ambitious Democratic governor and an overwhelmingly Democratic/Progressive legislature have marched resolutely toward their bright, shining dream of government-controlled, taxpayer financed health care.

During these four years the majority has lavished millions of dollars on study after dubious study, used to lend authority to their visionary legislative program.

During these years the Democratic governor and our legislative leadership have beaten down every attempt - some even cosponsored with conscientious Democrats – to prevent or reverse some of the unwise and costly choices required to implement single payer health care.

On December 17, 2014 the governor announced the demise of the great single payer dream, for the simple reason that, whatever the possible merits of Green Mountain Care, Vermonters could not be expected to suffer new taxes in excess of \$2 billion dollars a year, to pay for a government health care monopoly brought to you and managed by the same people who failed to convert \$170 million federal dollars into a working health insurance exchange serving just over a hundred thousand people.

Now, with those unhappy four years of costly failure fresh in our minds, it's time for legislators, Republican, Democratic, Progressive and Independent, to start to work together, in a practical, mutually respectful way, to shape a responsible and affordable policy path toward the goal we share.

What is that goal? Many of us believe it to be Universal access for every Vermonter to affordable health insurance and quality health care. To that we Republicans would add a special concern for the engines of Vermont's economy, the right of patients to make the key choices about their own health, and the imperative of avoiding creation of a monstrous government bureaucracy that would cripple our economy and eliminate the personal choices of our patient.

We believe that patients are not mere vessels into which a government-controlled monopoly can inject something called "health", and send the bill to taxpayers.

The primary responsibility for achieving and enjoying healthy lives lies with individual Vermonters and their families, not with government. Where families lack the resources to obtain health care, government of course has a role to play, as it does in managing broad public health initiatives to curtail disease.

Our caucus members and others have introduced a number of bills already this session that we feel will move us in a much better direction. Today we come together to announce the introduction of 8 bills to begin the reformation of a process gone sadly wrong over the past four years. Our efforts and that of many others in this body are aimed at bringing stability, certainty and affordability to Vermonters making health care insurance choices and to protect patient's rights. The lead sponsors will discuss those bills in a moment. In broad terms, these bills aim to protect the right of patients to choose their providers, afford more protection to providers against malpractice lawsuits, replace the failed Vermont Health Connect insurance exchange with something that works, end the Exchange's monopoly over insurance sales and contracting, and explicitly remove seniors on Medicare from state control under any Single Payer or All Payer experiment that the governor may attempt.

We also join in disapproving the governor's proposal for a new seven tenths of one percent tax on Vermonters' paychecks, not only to reduce the long standing and unfortunate Medicaid cost shift, but also to swell a health resources fund to underwrite even more of the governor's health care experiments.

Legislation being introduced today: H.77, H78, H.179, H.185, H.186, H.180, H.181 and H.182.

VERMONTERS DESERVE BETTER!

Thank you!