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HEALTHCARE: Common Sense Solutions

The United States health care system, while the best in the world, simply is not performing as well as it should. The cost of health care continues to soar and is threatening the bottom line and competitiveness of American industry, and leaving too many American families uninsured or underinsured.

And the challenges are only growing, due to rising health care costs. Consider:

Nationally, the United States spent more than \$2 trillion on health care in 2005 – nearly \$6,700 per person. That will rise to \$4 trillion by the year 2015 – or more than \$12,300 per person.

As a share of our gross domestic product, health care spending is projected to reach 20 percent by 2015 – up from about 16.2 percent in 2005.

Medicare outlays will exceed income for the first time in 2012 – leading to a 75-year unfunded liability for Medicare of \$68.1 trillion. Trillion.

These rising health care costs simply are not sustainable – not for businesses, not for government and certainly not for families. America is ready for answers. America is ready for common-sense solutions. And America is ready for policymakers to put their differences aside and work together.

Governor Thompson believes we must build a system that is affordable and accessible for everyone. And we can do this without a government-run health care program that includes the worst aspects of socialized medicine while robbing our great nation of its ingenuity in developing new cures and treatments for deadly illnesses.

And we can do it, if only we take some common-sense steps to bring our health care system into the 21st century:

1. We must build a system centered on preventive medicine, rather than curative. In this country, we wait until people get sick and then spend billions of dollars to try to make them well again. Why not invest up front in keeping our families healthy in the first place?
2. We must use information technology to cut costs, reduce medical errors and create a more efficient health care system. Our doctors use the latest technology to cure your illnesses, but manila folders to keep track what's wrong with you. The industry needs to work together to overcome the barriers to implementing information technology in the health field. We must make sure different systems to communicate with each other, so the information on a patient from a doctor's office in Iowa is useful to a hospital in California. Doctors, nurses and technicians must know how to use this new technology, and health care providers must be sure the technology is having the intended effect - that is, to save money and more importantly, to save lives.
3. Third, we must use the private sector and public sector to provide health insurance for all. It is a basic common sense approach to keeping people healthy and reining in health care costs. Governor Thompson proposes requiring states to organize purchasing pools among the uninsured. Such an arrangement would provide health insurance for families, while allowing the purchasing pools to negotiate better prices for care. It is unfair that the uninsured are often the only ones to be charged full price for health care, simply because they don't have the purchasing power of those with health insurance.
4. We must, once and for all, make sure health care and longterm care is

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affordable. For government, our Medicare and Medicaid systems will soon break the budgets – and families across America are grappling with how to pay for longterm care for themselves and for their parents. This isn't a problem that will go away if we simply ignore it.

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