

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, July 8, 2004
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NEW COALITION SET TO TACKLE HEALTH CARE REFORM

Montpelier, VT – Today, Senator Jim Leddy, chairman of Vermont's Senate Health and Welfare Committee and Lisa Ventriss, president of the Vermont Business Roundtable (VBR) announced the launch of a diverse coalition of stakeholder groups to develop a sustainable plan to transform Vermont's health care system.

The senior leadership of the following groups have been invited to participate on Coalition 21: ~~Transforming Health Care for the New Century~~: AARP, Coalition of Vermont Elders, Health Care for All, MVP Health Care, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont, Vermont Citizens Campaign for Health, Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, State Health Care Ombudsman, Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, Vermont Association of Non-Profit Organizations, Vermont Business Roundtable, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, Vermont Chamber of Commerce, Vermont Ecumenical Society, Vermont Medical Society, Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care, and Vermont State Labor Council.

"Rather than continue to address the current and impending problems by pursuing separate, parallel paths, it is our hope that a coalition will more effectively address Vermont's health care crisis," says Senator Jim Leddy.

Specifically, all participating stakeholder groups have agreed to accept three core principles in order to participate, which are 1) We have a crisis in health care; 2) Every Vermonter should have health care insurance; and 3) We agree to participate and be open to dialogue and to the ideas of others.

According to the VBR, a non-profit organization of the state's leading CEOs, who are dedicated to the thoughtful, deliberative, and well-documented analyses of significant public policy issues affecting all Vermonters:

- **Medical costs continue to be out of control.** Since 1996, total health care expenses in Vermont have increased from \$1.7B to \$3.2B in 2004; representing an 88% increase during a period when overall inflation was in the low single digits.
- **For all the resources that have been devoted to health care, Vermont still does not provide health insurance to all of its citizens.** Just over 10%, or 60,000 plus Vermont residents do not have health insurance.

"The goal of VBR is to help discover ways to provide better access to the highest quality of health care possible, for our employees and all the citizens of Vermont. While the dimensions of the current challenge are daunting, as entrepreneurs we sense that, through well-orchestrated reform, the current level of health care spending can obtain far better results for our state," says Lisa Ventriss.

Stephan Morse, President and CEO of the Windham Foundation will lead the endeavor as chairman of the coalition. Morse, who previously served as Vermont Speaker of the House from 1981-1984 brings

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demonstrated leadership and broad policy experience to the effort. The Windham Foundation is widely recognized as a leader in effectively convening people around issues that matter to Vermonters. The Snelling Center for Government has agreed to organize and facilitate this process.

"Vermont, like the rest of the nation, is in the midst of a health care crisis. All Vermonters in some form face this issue almost daily. Vermont may be the one state that has the courage to solve this issue. I look forward to working with Senator Leddy, the Vermont Business Roundtable, and the well represented group to help find a Vermont solution to this pressing public policy issue," says Morse.

Coalition 21: Transforming Health Care for the New Century:

Chairman: Stephan Morse
The Windham Foundation
843-2211

Staff: Glenn McRae
The Snelling Center for Government
859-3090

Conveners: Senator Jim Leddy
Senate Health and Welfare Committee
863-6613

Lisa Ventriss
Vermont Business Roundtable
865-0410

Coalition Members	Contact	Phone
AARP	Bobbie Kamen	224-1106
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont	Kevin Goddard	371-3225
Community of Vermont Elders	Tim Palmer	229-4731
House Health and Welfare Committee	Representative Tom Koch	476-4141
Vermont Health Care For All	Dr. Deborah Richter	224-9037
Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce	Wayne Roberts	863-3489
MVP Health Care	Jim Hester	264-6500
State Health Care Ombudsman	Donna Sutton-Fay	863-7155
Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems	Bea Grause	223-3461
Vermont Association of Non-Profit Organizations	Jane VanBuren	862-0292
Vermont Business Roundtable	Mark Neagley	658-6320
Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility	Spence Putnam	862-8347
Vermont Chamber of Commerce	Duane Marsh	229-2209
Vermont Citizens Campaign for Health	Richard Davis	251-0915
Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society	Rick Neu	434-7307
Vermont Medical Society	Paul Harrington	223-7898
Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care	Helen Riehle	229-2152
Vermont State Labor Council (AFL-CIO)	Dan Brush	223-5229

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Coalition 21: Principles for transforming healthcare for the new century

Coalition 21 was created to develop a consensus regarding how to transform Vermont's health care system. That system is changing rapidly, and most trends are heading in the wrong direction. It has become increasingly difficult for Vermonters to secure good health care at a realistic cost. Vermont, like the rest of the country, faces three critical and interconnected problems:

1. Healthcare costs are continuing to rise at a pace that is causing hardships to individuals and families, businesses, public institutions and the health care system itself;
2. There are serious concerns about the quality and safety of health care; and
3. There is a large and increasing number of people who have no health insurance or who are under-insured.

While recent work by agencies and institutions has addressed each of these, the work and the gains have been limited and fragmented.

Coalition 21 is united in calling for systemic and well-coordinated transformation of the health care system that encompasses the entire system, covering all Vermonters.

- The health care "system" at present does not operate as a complete and integrated system, and this accounts for a number of challenges in creating change that requires payers, providers, citizens, regulatory institutions, and administrative units to work together. The system must be organized and operated as a cohesive and unified system in order for successful change to be implemented.
- The changes to the health care system must be systemic and initiated across the board in a coordinated fashion. Piecemeal or stand-alone measures that affect only some groups will not be sufficient or equitable. Incremental steps, especially early in the process, will be necessary, but they must be taken within a complete vision of how they contribute to long-term outcomes, and how they tie into and advance a coordinated plan of transformation of the whole system.¹

Coalition 21 is united in support of the following principles as a framework for improving Vermont's health care system:

1. Universal access to essential health care services.
2. Coverage for care that is comprehensive and continuous.
3. Continuous improvement of health care quality and safety.
4. Health care financing that is sufficient, equitable, fair and sustainable.
5. Built-in accountability for quality, cost, access and participation.
6. Engagement of all Vermonters in healthy lifestyles and informed use of the system.

¹ The Health Care System includes all the overlapping systems that directly impact on the cost and delivery of health care. Coalition 21 is looking to inform specific changes that can be implemented in Vermont to meet its goals. However, it also acknowledges that some necessary changes must be implemented on a national scale or through economic and social institutions not in the scope of things that can be changed in Vermont. To address these issues, parallel strategies for change will be implemented to influence other institutions (e.g., federal legislation or regulation), while the focus will remain on changes that can be implemented in Vermont.

Specific proposals to improve the health care system in Vermont should be based on these five principles, discussed in greater detail below.

Principles of Health Care System Change for Vermont in the 21st Century

Principle I:

It is the policy of the State of Vermont to ensure universal access to and coverage for essential health care services for all Vermonters.

Universal access means the absence of barriers to essential health care services. Access needs to be equitable. Vermonters will have coverage for essential services that are delivered in the same high quality manner regardless of economic or geographic situations.

It is a critical social policy goal that all Vermonters have health coverage and that all Vermonters actively participate in the health system.

Principle II:

Health care coverage needs to be comprehensive and continuous.

Coverage for essential health services needs to follow the individual from birth to death, and be responsive and seamless through employment and life changes. Vermonters will have access to high quality care throughout their lives.

Principle III:

Vermont's health delivery system will model continuous improvement of health care quality and safety.

Continuous improvement in health care quality and safety will be integrated into the operation of the health care system, drawing on and promoting evidence-based and best practices, striving for optimal outcomes for the resources expended. It is essential that wellness and public health initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles and preventive care be the foundation of the health system. The health care system will promote care that is safe, timely, effective, patient-centered, efficient and equitable.²

² Institute of Medicine, *Crossing the Quality Chasm*, 2001: 39-40.

Six Aims for Health Care Improvement

- *Safe* - avoiding injuries to patients from the care that is intended to help them.
- *Effective* - providing services based on scientific knowledge to all who could benefit and refraining from providing services to those not likely to benefit (avoiding under use and overuse, respectively).
- *Patient-centered* - providing care that is respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs, and values and ensuring that patient values guide all clinical decisions.
- *Timely* - reducing waits and sometimes harmful delays for both those who receive and those who give care.
- *Efficient* - avoiding waste, in particular waste of equipment, supplies, ideas, and energy.
- *Equitable* - providing care that does not vary in quality because of personal characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, geographic location, and socioeconomic status.

See also the Health Resource Allocation Plan Statement of Principles (draft)
http://www.blbca.state.vt.us/HeaDiv/HRAP/HRAP_meeting_info/HRAP_assoc_materials/071404_doc6.pdf

Principle IV:

The financing of health care in Vermont will be sufficient, equitable, fair and sustainable.

Universal access to a continuous and comprehensive package of essential high quality health care is a public good. The financing mechanism for attaining a workable, affordable, and sustainable health care system needs to be adequately and fairly financed and operated in a manner that ensures both high quality of care and efficient use of resources.

Principle V:

Built-in accountability for quality, cost, access and participation will be the hallmarks of Vermont's health care system.

The health system will be accountable to the people it serves in respect to the quality of care and the management of costs.

Principle VI:

Vermonters will be engaged, to the best of their ability, to pursue healthy lifestyles, to focus on preventive care and wellness efforts, and make informed use of all health care services throughout their lives.

These six principles are essential for the successful transformation of the health care system. Coalition 21 is committed to identifying and advancing changes in the system that over time will achieve these goals.

Coalition Members:

AARP * Bi-State Primary Care Association * Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont * Community of Vermont Elders * Vermont Health Care for All * Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce * MVP Health Care, Vermont Region * Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council * Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems * Vermont Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations * Vermont Business Roundtable * Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility * Vermont Chamber of Commerce * Vermont Citizens Campaign for Health * Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights * Vermont Council of Developmental and Mental Health Services * Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society * Vermont Health Care Association * Vermont Medical Society * Vermont NEA * Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care * Vermont State Labor Council (AFL-CIO) * Vermont State Employees' Association * Vermont State Nurses' Association, Inc. And serving as individual members: Senator Jim Leddy, Representative John Tracy, Representative Tom Koch, Lisa Ventris, Otto Engelbarth and Con Hogan.