

HEALTH FREEDOM WATCH

★ Fourth Quarter 2006

★ President's Message ★

Looking Ahead

By Sue Blevins



The Institute for Health Freedom (IHF) is grateful for the support—both financial and otherwise—that we've received this past year from diverse donors and readers.

It's clear from readers' feedback that we're providing an invaluable service. Some have stressed that IHF is providing important information they're not getting elsewhere.

For example, donors informed us that they had not heard about the Citizens' Health Care Working Group and the opportunity for public comment, until reading about it in *Health Freedom Watch*.

Forthcoming Hearings on National Health Reform

Given that Congress is mandated by law to hold hearings on national health reform, 2007 is going to be a crucial time for monitoring proposals and educating policymakers.

Just what *do* we want our national health policies to look like? And how have this past year's health policy changes affected health-care costs, choices, and privacy?

National policymakers can learn from their successes as well as their errors as they debate health reform in the coming year.

In April I explained how the 2006 Massachusetts universal health insurance law could adversely affect all

citizens' privacy because the plan requires insurers and health-care providers to submit patient data to a new council—a centralized clearinghouse.

Massachusetts Plan Already Expected to Cost \$151 Million More Than Original Estimate

Sally Pipes, president of the California-based Pacific Research Institute, recently reported that already the law is projected to cost more than the public was led to believe—clearly a major public-policy error.

Pipes noted, "Led by Republican Gov. Mitt Romney, supporters promised that health insurance could be provided with only a slight increase in expenditures. Skeptics at the time pointed out that this would not be possible, but were dismissed...."

"Administration officials are now telling Wall Street they expect the plan to be quite expensive. In an Aug. 17 filing to support general obligation bonds, officials project that the new plan will increase Massachusetts government health spending by \$276.4 million in 2007.

"That's a \$151 million boost over what the public was told the plan would cost as recently as April. 'Somebody once told me: if you want to know what is really going on in state government, look at the bond documents,' the writers at Healthy Blog, who are tracking the details of the implementation process, pointed out, when posting the filings. 'They

can say whatever they want to the public, but they can go to jail for fibbing to Wall Street.'" (*Washington Times*, Nov. 5, 2006)

When it comes to freedom and privacy, we can't afford to miss the mark on these issues. That is why health-freedom supporters should get ready to voice their opinions on national health reform.

And IHF looks forward to sharing helpful research, analyses, and ideas that you can use as talking points in the coming year.