Gov. Perry: Federal Health Care Proposals Would Cost Texans Tens of Billions of Dollars

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Tuesday, August 18, 2009

Good morning everyone and thank you for being here today.

Surrounded by all these doctors, I'm reminded of the good people who have been helping me recover from my collarbone injury.

We have some great doctors in Texas.

We are here to discuss a wide-ranging national conversation, one that has been contentious at times and even downright confusing to folks who want answers.

People have come at this from both sides of the aisle, choosing to argue any number of perspectives, from the search for a moral imperative to the types of procedures that will or won't be allowed.

Today, we're here to discuss the issue from a baseline perspective that everyone can understand, asking and answering the simple question- what will the options being considered in Washington cost Texans?

The legislation currently being considered not only poses a serious threat to patients and providers, it will cost Texas taxpayers tens of billions of dollars over the next ten years alone without significantly improving care for Texans.

The starting point for today's discussion is a report from the Texas Public Policy Foundation. The legislation detailed in this report does not bode well for Texas.

Once again, the federal government is bearing down on the states, preparing to take greater control through mandates and trampling

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innovation through runaway costs.

I am continually amazed, but not surprised at Washington's remarkably consistent approach, combining a willingness to spend money they don't have on solutions they haven't thought through for problems they don't really understand.

There is no question that there are aspects to our healthcare system that are in need of repair and reform, but issuing top-down mandates on a break-neck timetable is a surefire way to make things worse.

It’s ironic that folks in Washington would look north for inspiration to Canada, a place where the single-payer system of care is on the verge of imploding.

Those aren't my words. That's what the incoming president of the Canadian Medical Association said just the other day.

The current president also admitted “competition should be welcomed, not feared.”

At a time when our neighbors to the north are experiencing the consequences of trying to be all things to all people and desperately seeking ways to reintroduce a little free enterprise into their collapsing system our leaders in Washington are trying to drag us down that same failed path.

It is my sincere hope that those leaders will spend a little less time talking at their town halls and a little more time listening to people like those here today, the doctors who administer lifesaving procedures, and the hospitals who invest in the state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment.

I hope they’ll also take the time to realize the terrible impact of increased taxation because the dollars they discuss come from somewhere, and that somewhere is just about always the purses and wallets of everyday Americans, of Texans who are already working hard to stay afloat during tough economic times.

The fact of the matter is that we are continuing our efforts to reform healthcare here at the state level.

Two years ago, I laid out a comprehensive plan to transform health care in Texas and requested a federal waiver to let us make changes.

The plan focuses on state-specific solutions that will eliminate costly federal mandates and use those resources to provide more low-income Texans with insurance, reduce expensive emergency room visits for basic care, and make it easier for the working poor to buy into employer-sponsored insurance.

Sadly, the glacial pace of progress in Washington has held us up, as the waiver that would allow us to pursue real reform has been stuck somewhere in the federal system for over a year.

It is clear Washington has no interest in allowing states to pursue their own, tailored solutions to problems that affect their citizens. Instead, the powers-that-be are crafting a plan to inject themselves into our lives farther than ever before and take more of our money to fund it than we're able to spare.

The challenge before us is to be informed, and encourage our leaders in Washington to do this right even if it takes a
little longer and gives states a little more say.

I strongly encourage folks to reflect on this important TPPF report and consider the economic impact these reforms would have before continuing this mad rush to turn a partially-formed plan into the law of the land.

Otherwise, we run the risk of not fixing a damaged system, but causing its implosion that will take the national economy with it.

Thank you all for being here today. Let’s take some questions from members of the working press here today about this report.