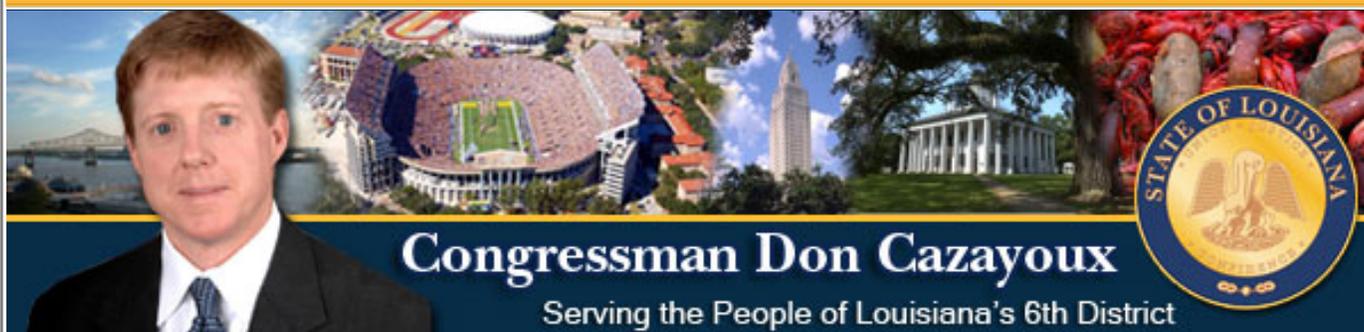


July 24, 2008

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Congressman Don Cazayoux

Serving the People of Louisiana's 6th District

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Dear Friend,

Last week, Congress enacted important legislation that helps our seniors and ensures that Medicare continues to work. Overriding a Presidential veto, Congress passed the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008. I was proud to support and vote for this bill.

Specifically, H.R. 6331 prevents a 10.6% cut in the reimbursement rate for doctors who treat Medicare patients. A rate cut would have forced many doctors to drop Medicare patients, meaning that many seniors would have to stop seeing doctors they know and trust in order to receive treatment under Medicare.

In addition to bolstering Medicare, this bill also ensured that retired and active duty military members will continue to have the same access to Tricare that they now enjoy. Tricare is the health insurance program for the military. Because Tricare's reimbursement rates are based on Medicare, the program would have experienced a doctor's rate cut.

H.R. 6331 improves other aspects of Medicare as well, including better coverage for mental health and preventive health. It also ensures that rural health care is on par with traditional health care services and improves the reimbursement process for pharmacies and pharmacists.

With the passage of this legislation, Congress took an important step in protecting the availability of quality health care for our seniors. Health care, however, will remain one of the most important issues that Congress must address in the coming months and years.

Veterans' Health

I am also proud to announce that the Veterans' Affairs Committee unanimously approved a bill that I sponsored which will improve veterans' health care services. H.R. 6445 contains several positive measures for veterans' health care, including:

- Preventing VA Hospitals from charging co-payments for veterans who are catastrophically disabled
- Expanding counseling services to family members of veterans who receive non-service connected treatment
- Streamlining the accounting and billing process for veterans' health care by regionalizing accounting centers
- Requiring the VA to develop a comprehensive policy on the management of pain experienced by veterans, including pain management, department-wide standards, research, education, and accountability

This bill addresses critical needs and creates more accountability at the Department of Veterans

Affairs. It's an important step in the process of improving conditions for veterans- specifically in the field of health care- in America. The House should consider this bill before Congress breaks for the August recess.

The SHOP Act

Recently, I became a co-sponsor of the SHOP Act, which is short for the Small Business Health Options Program. The SHOP Act seeks to make it easier for small businesses to provide health insurance to their employees. It helps two critically important aspects of American society: small businesses and health care.

The SHOP Act:

- Provides tax credits for small businesses that provide health insurance to their employees
- Stabilizes insurance premium rates from year-to-year in order to prevent huge rate hikes
- Prevents insurance companies from excluding individual insurance policy holders based on pre-existing medical conditions
- Creates statewide and eventually nationwide insurance purchasing pools, which will lower administrative costs for small businesses (currently, 20 – 25% of a small business's health insurance premium is spent on administrative costs)
- Expands health insurance options and flexibility for individuals

The SHOP Act is a good start to providing more Americans with affordable and quality health care. There are many small businesses that would like to give their employees health insurance, but simply cannot afford it. This will give them the incentive they need to provide more of their employees health care. It's good for business, but more importantly, it's good for health of the American people.

SCHIP

In the coming months, Congress will also once again consider expanding SCHIP, or the State Children's Health Insurance Program. In Louisiana, the program is known as LaCHIP and I have always been a strong proponent of the program.

SCHIP has bi-partisan support both at the federal and state level and has been a highly successful program since it was passed in 1997. The program is administered by the states, but receives federal funding. Recently, Congress has tried to expand the program to cover more children, and I will support the legislation when it is considered again.

It is my belief that we should do everything in our power to insure our children. Parents should never be forced to forgo taking their child to a doctor due to financial concerns. By giving children quality and accessible health care early, we give them the foundation they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

Until more Americans have health insurance, health care will continue to be a top concern for American citizens. It is a complicated issue, but one that can be solved through common-sense solutions and by working across party lines. I will continue to look for and find those solutions in Congress.

Sincerely,



Congressman Don Cazayoux

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