

HOUSE MEDICAID EXPANSION HEARINGS

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

1:30 pm, Statehouse, Topeka, Kan.

Finn M. Bullers | Policy adviser Greater KC Spinal Cord Injury Association
United Spinal Association
3515 W. 78th St. | Prairie Village, Kan. 66208
C: 913-706-2894 | finn.bullers@aol.com

Kansas, expand Medicaid now

Greetings, fellow Kansans.

My name is Finn Bullers, 51, a Prairie Village father of two, journalist, taxpayer, disability civil rights' advocate and target of Gov. Sam Brownback's attack on social services.

When it comes to state aid cuts, I'm not alone.beingbeing

Gov.b Brownback and his politics have got to go. As a wheelchair user with muscular dystrophy, type-1 diabetes and a tube in my throat to breathe, I spent 2013 tangling with the governor and his Medicaid staff just to stay alive.

What I learned along the way is that Kansas is quickly losing its moderate base and it is being..k.. hijacked by hypocrites.

Nearly three out of four Kansans -- or 72 percent -- support expanding Medicaid -- revamped and renamed in the Sunflower State as KanCare. But Gov. Brownback says no to Medicaid expansion -- hoping to poke a sharp political stick in the eye of our President.

Ironic -- that five months earlier on the campaign trail in Olathe -- Brownback said that a 69 percent support level on any given issue mandates a political "will of the people" to govern as the poll -- however dated -- dictates.

On that day in Olathe, Gov. Brownback used that 69 percent figure to slam same-sex marriage -- asserting Kansans felt by a three-to-five margin that marriage is only between a man and a woman.

So let's stop to do a little math. You can draw your own conclusions. Remember, 72 percent of Kansans support Medicaid expansion.

And our governor knows that 72 percent is a bigger number than the 69 percent figure he cites to support discriminating against homosexuals and lesbians -- masking his smug contempt as the "will of the people."

In my book that's hypocrisy. But it doesn't stop there.

Every second we delay expanding Medicaid is federal tax money out of Kansas pockets and into the healthcare pockets of other states. Since Jan. 1, 2014, our lost Medicaid funds from the federal government are approaching half a billion dollars -- with a "b." At some \$470 million, the clock ticks.

Over time, the numbers just get worse. Independent studies show that without Medicaid expansion, Kansas loses some \$2.2 billion in federal funds between 2016 and 2020. And up to 144,000 low-income, elderly and disabled Kansas will be denied insurance and preventative care by 2017.

Without Medicaid expansion, more Kansans will die.

Credible studies at Harvard show up to 330 Kansans died last year without the funds Medicaid expansion could have provided.

Steve Kelly, board chairman of the Kansas Hospital Association, supports Medicaid expansion big time. Kelly goes so far as to agree to a bed tax to fund the 10 percent state obligation necessary after 2017 to fund Medicaid expansion. Now, Gov. Sam Brownback has no cover to deny Medicaid expansion based on the financial "burden" to Kansas taxpayers.

A recent Gallup poll shows Kansas was the only state in the country where the percentage of uninsured residents actually increased from 2013 to 2014.

Just another national embarrassment for the Sunflower State.

In contrast, nationwide, the uninsured rate fell 3.5 points. Arkansas and Kentucky -- two states that have expanded Medicaid -- recorded the biggest drops: Arkansas at 11.1 points and Kentucky at 9.8 points,

Kentucky is seeing a positive economic impact from Medicaid expansion. According to its governor, the state added 12,000 jobs last year, including more than 5,400 in health care. That number is expected to rise to 40,000 new jobs by 2021.

Expanding Medicaid, Kentucky said, provides a net economic impact of \$30 billion over eight years.

In the Bluegrass State, uncompensated care fell to \$766 million in 2014, down 60 percent from \$1.9 billion the previous year.

The net savings to Kansas when KanCare is expanded? \$29 million in 2016 and some \$36 million a year from 2016 to 2020.

Mr. Governor, we implore you. The time is now to expand Medicaid.