

Washington State Hospital Association Statement on the Federal Stimulus Plan:
HEALTH CARE MONEY FOR HEALTH CARE PATIENTS

Congress appears to have finished its work on the federal stimulus plan. Funding for health care is a significant part of the package, with total expenditures of \$87 billion nationwide. The stimulus funding is provided to states by increasing the federal government's share of Medicaid spending. (Medicaid expenditures are jointly funded by state and federal governments.)

Washington State's share of this funding is expected to be ***\$2.06 billion over the next two years***. Congress clearly intended this money to shore up faltering state health care programs. Washington State should use it as it was intended – health care money for health care patients.

The Governor has proposed \$990 million in cuts to health care. Her proposed cuts will shred the health care safety net, create 60,000 new uninsured people virtually overnight, erode the mental health system, and make damaging cuts to providers such as hospitals and community clinics.

The federal stimulus money for health care is more than enough to make up for these cuts. Legislators may be tempted to use the money for other uses. They should resist this temptation, and guard the money for health care, not use it to fill the general budget gap.

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