



Wednesday, December 09, 2009

For more information contact:

Cassie Sauer, Washington State Hospital Association, 206/216-2538, cassies@wsaha.org

Governor Proposes Major Health Cuts, Plans for Revenue to Fix Them

All-Cuts Budget Would Hurt the Most Vulnerable

In order address the worst recession in 80 years, the Governor proposed enormous cuts to the health care system and health care for our most vulnerable residents. These cuts threaten quality health care services for everyone in Washington State. Under her proposal, at least 85,000 more people would become uninsured. She also stated, however, her commitment to repairing the worst health care cuts through new revenues.

Specifically, the Governor's budget proposal:

- Slashes support for hospital care for low-income and disabled families and children by five percent (on top of a four percent cut last year), destabilizing the hospital safety net.
- Forces 67,000 low-income working adults off health insurance through the elimination of Basic Health, the state's only health insurance program for low-income working adults.
- Breaks the promise to cover all children by 2010 with a sharp reduction in eligibility for Apple Health for Kids, and jettisons nearly 20,000 kids from insurance.

"We appreciate the difficult situation the Governor is in as a result of the recession," said Leo Greenawalt, president of the Washington State Hospital Association. "We applaud her courage and commitment to find revenue to close the budget gap and rebuild our economic future. Clearly, without significant new funding, the people of Washington will be hurt by cuts to vital health programs."

Hospital leaders also appreciate the Governor's interest in "helping others help themselves," including helping hospitals gain access to more federal dollars. Hospitals statewide are very supportive of this proposal.

If the health care cuts as proposed were enacted, all Washington residents would feel the impact:

- At least 85,000 vulnerable children and adults would become uninsured – virtually overnight. This means emergency rooms would become significantly more crowded, with longer wait times for everyone.
- Hospitals would be forced to increase costs for businesses and employers who provide health insurance to cover the rate cuts for state-insured patients.
- Many children and adults would not be able to get treatment for their health needs – including communicable diseases that can be easily spread to others.

- Hospitals would be forced to cut important – but money-losing – programs their communities rely on, including mental health services, free cancer screenings, and immunization outreach.

Hospital leaders statewide are available to discuss the impact of the Governor's budget on their communities.