

Governor Doyle Hosts Roundtable Meeting in Hudson on Healthy Wisconsin Initiative



Governor Jim Doyle answers questions about the Healthy Wisconsin program during a stop in Hudson on July 12th.

On July 12, Governor Jim Doyle and Jason Helgerson, Executive Assistant of the Department of Health and Family Services, met with Hudson-area business and community leaders for a roundtable meeting to gather input about his Healthy Wisconsin action plan. The meeting followed Gov. Doyle's Executive Order a week earlier to create a Healthy Wisconsin Council to improve access to affordable health insurance for businesses and individuals. The comments and input received at the meeting will be used to develop the council's action plan.

Healthy Wisconsin is designed to increase access to health insurance and lower these costs. Under Healthy Wisconsin, insurance premiums would be reduced by creating a statewide reinsurance program to provide catastrophic insurance. "In

this country, 50 percent of health care costs are incurred by 5 percent of the people," Gov. Doyle said. "You can't put a dent in health care costs without addressing the exploding price of catastrophic care and finding a way to make it more affordable. That's what the Healthy Wisconsin initiative is about."

In Wisconsin, seven percent of residents were without health insurance at any given point in time in 2004. There were 90,000 children without health insurance for at least part of the year.

Gov. Doyle tasked the Healthy Wisconsin Council with developing an action plan to reduce the number of uninsured Wisconsin residents in half by 2010 and reduce health insurance premiums by as much as 30 percent for businesses. In addition, the Council is to identify ways to strengthen the individual and small group insurance market and increase the number of businesses that offer comprehensive, affordable health insurance. The Council must submit its action plan to Gov. Doyle by December 1, 2006.

The Council will be co-chaired by Dr. David Kindig, Emeritus Professor of Population Health Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine, and Michael Weiden, partner at Quarles & Brady, LLP. The co-chairs will lead health care industry leaders, health insurance executives, small businesses, major employers, community leaders and government agencies in developing the action plan.

The Healthy Wisconsin Council is seeking input from small business owners and employees, among others, about creative ways to lower health insurance costs. Gov. Doyle asked Helgerson to relay the comments and input received during the July 12th discussion back to the Council.

To learn more about the Healthy Wisconsin initiative, visit www.wisconsin.gov/healthywisconsin or contact Stephanie Marquis, Department of Health and Family Services, at (608) 266-1683 or MarquisS@dhfs.state.wi.us.