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Magazine article addresses pressing health care concerns

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MAGAZINE ARTICLE ADDRESSES PRESSING HEALTH CARE CONCERNS

MISSOULA —

During the last four decades, growth in the cost of delivering health care persistently has exceeded the overall average growth rate in the economy by nearly 2 percentage points, according to an article published in the latest issue of the Montana Business Quarterly.

Health care reform of some shape will have to occur because our present health care cost trajectory is unsustainable, author Gregg Davis explains in an article titled "Health Care Reform: What Should We Expect?"

"In polls across the country, fixing health care is right up there with fixing the economy," Davis said. "Emotions are high on both sides of the health care debate, as evidenced by President Obama’s visit to Belgrade this summer where both supporters and opponents of the Obama-style reform showed up in large numbers."

According to the article, the issues driving health care reform are basically twofold: cost and access to health care for the uninsured.

The Census Bureau estimates that 46 million people in the United States were uninsured in 2007. In Montana, a state with a population just under 1 million, nearly 150,000 people are uninsured.

Because of increasing health care costs, more than half of all Americans report having cut back in some way on medical spending. More than one-third of households state that they have
used over-the-counter drugs or relied on home remedies instead of seeing a doctor, the article states. A similar number have canceled dental care. Other reactions to the cost of health care included skipping recommended doses of medicine or not filling prescriptions at all. Nearly three of 10 people report postponing recommended medical care, some for a chronic illness such as diabetes.

Health care reform must consider cost and how the programs are financed.

"Ideally, reform will promote a system where access is improved for millions of Americans without further driving up costs," Davis said. "And, ideally, reform should finance programs without adding to the federal deficit and, ultimately, our country’s growing national debt. Still another challenge is that reform should restrain cost increases without sacrificing quality or choice for the consumer."

Other articles in the autumn issue of the Montana Business Quarterly include “Healthy People 2010: The Montana Experience,” “Economic Outlook: Montana’s Recovery is Closer,” “Managing Montana’s Forest Lands: The Next 100 Years” and “Montana’s Labor Pool: More Workers than Anticipated Available to Fill Jobs.”

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