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NIXON'S HEALTH CARE PROPOSAL A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, PROVIDES FOR ADDITIONAL FEDERAL FUNDING

MO has lost about \$782 million in federal funds in 3 years due to Medicaid reductions

St. Louis, MO – Today, Missouri Gubernatorial candidate Jay Nixon released his health care plan for the state. **While not a complete solution to Missouri's current health care crisis, three pieces of the proposed plan, in particular, would have a significant, positive impact on the state, according to the Missouri Budget Project, a non-partisan fiscal analysis organization.**

Included in the plan is full restoration of the Medicaid cuts that were made in Missouri in 2005. More than 100,000 people, including 74,000 low income working parents, thousands of Missourians who are living with disabilities, and thousands of children, could have their health care restored through this measure.

"During the last legislative session the Missouri General Assembly failed to pass Governor Blunt's proposed Insure Missouri program, which would have restored coverage to many of those affected by the 2005 cuts," said Amy Blouin, Executive Director of the Missouri Budget Project. "Attorney General Nixon's plan to restore coverage to all Missourians affected by the 2005 cuts is critically important, especially during these difficult economic times."

"Not only would this policy ensure that our families receive critical health care during this economic downturn, the federal matching dollars received by the state through Medicaid would serve as a real economic stimulus, allowing increased federal funds to flow into Missouri's health care industry," Blouin said.

In the last three years (Fiscal Years 2006 -2008) the Department of Social Services estimates that the state of Missouri lost \$782 million in federal funds due to the reductions in Medicaid eligibility and services.

"This measure would bring those critical funds back to Missouri at a time when they are seriously needed by our families who struggle to find health care, small employers who struggle to access affordable insurance, and by our economy that is struggling with job loss," Blouin continued.

Additionally, under Nixon's plan, **Missourians who receive insurance through Medicaid will once again be assured comprehensive benefits including dental and optometric care.** Restoration of these benefits was passed by the Missouri General Assembly in 2007 but has not been funded by the Legislature.

Finally, tens of thousands of children could receive health care coverage through Nixon's proposal to expand eligibility for SCHIP, the State Children's Health Insurance Program. **In particular, families who have children with special needs, and difficulty accessing affordable insurance plans, could finally be assured their children will receive the care they need.**

"Restoration of Medicaid to those affected by the 2005 cuts, coverage of dental and vision benefits, and expansion of health care for Missouri kids are all critical components of assuring quality medical care and a healthy Missouri," Blouin said. "This proposed health care plan would be a significant step forward in helping all Missourians have access to health care."

The measures proposed by Attorney General Nixon also makes good fiscal sense for the state, Blouin noted. **For each dollar the state invests in Medicaid and SCHIP, the federal government provides between \$1.56 and \$2.84 in federal matching funds that go to Missouri's health care industry.**

However, Blouin said that while the plan is a step in the right direction, it is not the complete solution to Missouri's current health care crisis.

"There are currently 770,000 Missourians who are uninsured and don't receive the preventive health care that they need," Blouin said. **"While this measure would help a portion of those folks, Missouri must continue to come together and work in a non-partisan manner to ensure that these measures pass within the next legislative session. We must develop a comprehensive, Missouri solution to our health care crisis, no matter who is living in the Governor's mansion next year."**

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The Mission of the Missouri Budget Project is: To advance public policies that improve economic opportunities for all Missourians – particularly low and middle-income families – by providing reliable and objective research, public education and advocacy. More information is available at www.mobudget.org.