



05/17/2007

County supports health insurance

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Board member questions resolution's timing

In a largely symbolic vote, the Madison County Board on Wednesday approved a resolution "supporting health insurance assistance for every citizen."

The resolution specifically mentions the plight facing the middle class, which doesn't qualify for government assistance but which nonetheless faces rising health care premiums that can put health insurance out of reach.

The resolution originated with the Health Department and Government Relations committees and recognizes "a definite obligation of the government to assist the middle class, both uninsured and heavily burdened with health insurance costs, as well as all citizens of the United States."

The measure passed on a voice vote.

The resolution encourages the U.S. Congress and the Illinois General Assembly to address the problem and come up with "an equitable solution that will assure appropriate health care for all."

Jean Myers, a Republican from Troy, objected to the timing of the resolution, saying that state legislators might view it as support for Gov. Blagojevich's gross receipts tax plan.

That plan was laid out in the governor's State of the State message last month as a way to raise \$6 billion for general funds expenses, largely education and health care.

"I absolutely cannot support that," Myers said. "I sympathize with people who have concerns. It's a problem. But I believe a national health care plan is the solution. But I really don't want this to go to Springfield or Washington and have this construed as support for a gross receipts tax or any other taxation proposal."

Judy Kuhn, a Republican from Highland who proposed the resolution to the committee, responded that the resolution has nothing to do with the gross receipts tax. "This is something that is one of the biggest problems this country faces," Kuhn said. "The poor people, there are programs for. The wealthy can afford it. It's a problem, and we're just saying, 'Let's do something.'"

Helen Hawkins praised Kuhn for pushing the proposal.

"I think it's a good thing that we have one of our own who is concerned about every citizen. Thank you, Judy."

After the meeting, County Board members Jack Minner, of Edwardsville, and Brenda Roosevelt, of Glen Carbon, said they supported the resolution.

"How can you vote against it?" Minner asked.

"There's just real need for health care for our country," Roosevelt said. "The problem needs to be addressed for a lot of people."

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