

Health Care: More and more people in Washington are Uninsured!

Over half a million people in Washington don't have health insurance, and the ranks of the uninsured are rising. More and more people in Washington simply can't afford the skyrocketing cost of health care. According to a Kaiser survey, between 2002 and 2003 the cost of private health premiums rose 13.9% and the cost that individual employees kicked into their own insurance went up 53%.

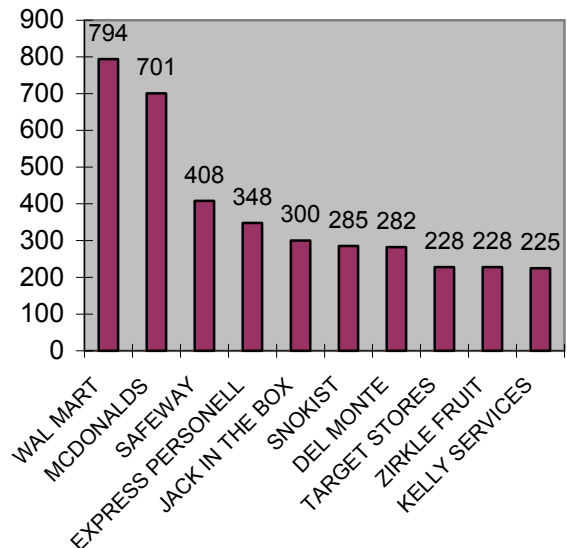
This year the Washington health care system will pay for \$400 million in uncompensated care. Yet over 80% of the uninsured live in families that are working. We ALL eventually pick up the tab when employers don't provide health care for their workers, through our taxes and through higher insurance premiums for everyone else.

Some big businesses who rake in big profits in Washington are a big part of the problem. Instead of providing health care for their employees, they rely on state programs like Medicaid and the Basic Health Plan (BHP) to cover their workers. In fact, Walmart has more employees enrolled in Medicaid than any other single employer in Washington.

Big Employers Should PLAY or PAY!

Washington's big employers should either PLAY and provide health care for their employees or PAY their fair share to the state for providing that coverage. Lawmakers should pass this kind of "Pay or Play" legislation requiring employers with more than 50 workers on the payroll working more than 86 hours a month would be required to provide health insurance for their employees OR pay the state a fee. If collected, the fees would go toward paying for health care for those employees on the Basic Health Plan (BHP.)

Top Ten Employers with Employees on State Health Care Programs



Key Messages!

What to say!

Problem: The cost of health care is skyrocketing and many working people don't have health coverage. Meanwhile their employers are raking in big profits in Washington State.

Solution: Big businesses should play by the rules and provide health care for their workers or pay their fair share to the state. The legislature should restore health coverage for people on Medicaid and the Basic Health Plan (BHP.)

Action: Please fight for Pay or Play legislation to compel businesses into providing health care for their workers so that everyone who works has health care, and restore coverage people on Medicaid and BHP.

Essential Services for People with lower incomes at RISK!

Despite the fact that the ranks of the uninsured are rising, lawmakers have cut \$766 million from health programs for people with lower incomes in Washington. It is essential that we protect funding for health care and urge lawmakers to make restorations in the budget.

45,000 Kids Have Lost Medicaid!

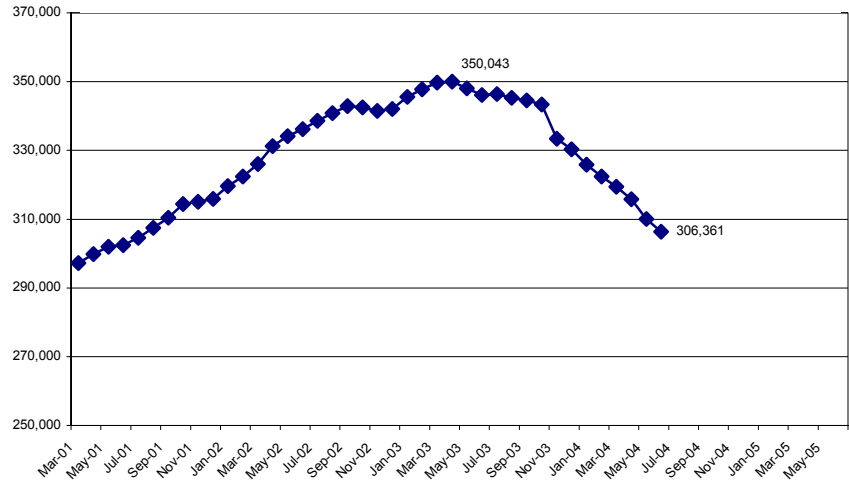
Since 2002 over 45,000 low income children have lost Medicaid. This dramatic drop has resulted of from policy changes that made parents do more paper work and apply for Medicaid more often to keep their coverage. These changes came on the heels of a decision to transfer low income immigrant kids from Medicaid to the Basic Health Plan (BHP.) Of the 28,000 immigrant children affected by this change over half of kids did not successfully make the transition and are now uninsured.

Kids without health coverage are less healthy than insured kids because their parents are more likely to postpone needed health care and let prescriptions go unfilled due to cost. In order to ensure the safety and well being of our state's kids, we must make sure every child in Washington has health care. The legislature must breakdown administrative barriers that prevent eligible kids from getting Medicaid and restore benefits to immigrant children.

General Assistance at risk for People with Disabilities!

Nearly 9,000 people with very low incomes in Washington rely on General Assistance—Unemployable (GAU) because they are temporarily unable to work due to mental illness or physical disabilities. To help them meet their basic needs they receive a meager \$339 a month. Most use

Number of Children on Medicaid Drops Dramatically!



this money to pay for shelters or to contribute to their subsidized housing. Without the help many would become homeless. However, caseloads for GAU are increasing and lawmakers have repeatedly eyed this critical program for budget cuts. It is vital that we urge our lawmakers to protect funding for GAU!

Dental Services Cut for Elderly, Disabled and People with Low Incomes!

In 2003 lawmakers cut critical dental services for the nearly 190,000 blind, elderly and disabled and 115,000 low income parents on Medicaid. As a result of these cuts, adults on Medicaid can no longer get crowns and root canals on many of their teeth. This not only puts the physical health of the elderly and disabled at risk, it also makes it extremely difficult for people with lower incomes to get jobs with broken teeth.

Lawmakers must increase access to dental care for people with lower incomes and restore the budget cuts so that people on Medicaid can have healthy teeth!