

**Rexburg Standard Journal, Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2008 – Guest Opinion by
Rep. Mike Simpson (2 pages)**

Some healthcare solutions

Americans receive the best healthcare in the world. However, many Idahoans are concerned about the rising cost of medical bills and health insurance, and we need to work to ensure that healthcare remains accessible to everyone. I don't believe that a government-run national healthcare program, like those of Canada or Europe, is the answer to the challenges that the American system faces.

Instead, I believe that we as a country need to work together to decide government's role in healthcare, employer's role, and most importantly, what will be the individual's responsibility. At the same time, we must keep working to make healthcare available and affordable to all Americans.

While improving access, we must also ensure that quality of care does not diminish.

During my time in Congress, I have supported a number of important health initiatives to increase access to healthcare for our country's most vulnerable populations. I have also supported initiatives to make healthcare more affordable for our nation's small businesses and families that are struggling to maintain healthcare coverage.

I voted in support of reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

This important program provides assistance to hard-working, low-income families to help them obtain healthcare for their children.

Intervening early in children's lives makes a huge difference in their growth and development. Unhealthy children have difficulty concentrating and often miss school, and studies show they have more trouble learning than healthy children. Children are America's most vulnerable and precious resource, and we need to ensure they have the tools they need to succeed.

I have also voted to maintain our senior citizens' access to their physicians and healthcare providers by supporting legislation to postpone the proposed cuts to doctors who see Medicare patients. This legislation also included provisions to protect seniors' access to physical therapists, help community pharmacies struggling to keep their doors open and provide assistance to rural providers in Idaho and across the country. I am also a strong supporter of efforts to reduce costs of prescription drugs.

There is no disputing the fact that American consumers pay significantly more for the same prescription drugs as our counterparts around the world.

I am a strong supporter of legislation that would allow re-importation of FDA-approved medications from Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan and pass along the savings to their American customers.

In addition, I have consistently supported efforts to reform medical malpractice laws to provide reasonable limits on medical liability awards that are currently causing higher health coverage costs and fewer health care
Health care op ed 1

providers. I have also supported legislation to allow small business owners to band together to obtain quality health care at a lower cost by taking advantage of the same economies of scale, flexibility, bargaining clout, and administrative efficiency that larger companies and unions enjoy under the ERISA law.

I also believe that our government has a responsibility to reform Medicare and Medicaid before spending on these important government programs becomes unsustainable.

In less than ten years, spending on Medicare alone is projected to account for over 50 percent of all federal spending. We are rapidly reaching a financial crisis point, as spending on just Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security will quickly consume more money than we currently spend to finance our entire government.

While I believe that Americans receive the best healthcare in the world, we need to continue to look for solutions to make healthcare more affordable and improve access to quality care for all Americans.

Now more than ever, we must work together to find a bipartisan solution to reform healthcare.

Simpson is a U.S. representative from Idaho.