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Group wants health care reform for small businesses

BY NED B. HUNTER
NHUNTER@JACKSONSUN.COM
• APRIL 1, 2009

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As health care reform begins to gain momentum, a Nashville-based, nonprofit organization is trying to make sure any reforms will meet the needs of small-business owners.

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Lori Smith, director of special projects for the Tennessee Health Care Campaign, is talking to small-business owners across the state to find out how future reforms can, or cannot, help contain costs and let [business](#) owners who currently can't provide insurance to employees do so in the future. Her organization considers a small business to be one with 50 employees or less.

"Health care is an economic issue," she said, "and health care is failing [small business](#), which is the backbone of our economy."

Smith said her bipartisan organization does not support specific legislation; instead it backs particular principles. Smith was at the Jackson-Madison County Public Library in Jackson on

Tuesday, holding the first meeting of a local chapter she is helping to build.

"Small business has a large voice in the health care debate that is largely untapped," she said.

Smith's group has contracted with Vanderbilt University to perform a random survey of 3,000 state business owners about their ideas surrounding health care reform. It should be completed in May.

The group also has formed the Tennessee Small Business Coalition for Healthcare Security to give a voice to business owners adversely impacted by rising costs in the health care system.

Smith said high health care costs impact small [businesses](#) by greatly affecting profits. When a business cannot provide health care to employees it harms its ability to recruit and retain employees, and causes higher employee absenteeism, Smith said.

"Small employers typically pay about 18 percent more for health insurance coverage than large businesses," she said. "In short, it is a critical issue for small business, especially in this economic downturn."

For more information or to take the organization's survey, call Smith at (615) 478-0071, or send an e-mail to lsmith@thcc2.org. For more information about the Tennessee Health Care Campaign, visit www.tennicare.org.

Visit jacksonsun.com and share your thoughts.

- Ned Hunter, 425-9641

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smuggler wrote:

I am for reforms that move us toward covering the estimated 47 million uninsured, if it does not destroy the system that currently covers the rest of the population. The majority (about 80%) of Americans are happy with thier health care plan.

There are a significant number of uninsureds who choose to be uninsured. Many have resources and choose to self pay. A lot of younger people don't see the value of insurance because they are healthy and don't want to spend any money on something they think they will not use. A large number of kids are eligible for CHIP and are not enrolled.

The solution is not a simple, one bullet fix, and single payor is not the magic bullet that some think it is.

4/1/2009 11:33:18 PM

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pontesisto wrote:

Single payer is the only plan that really works for small business yet it is not even included in the reform debate in Washington. I recently joined a voting bloc at http://www.votingbloc.org/Health_Bloc.php Hopefully we can pressure Congress to pass single payer and relieve the biggest burden facing small business.

4/1/2009 9:25:46 AM

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