

Healthy competition is the key to health care reform

By Sally West

More than any other single issue, health care policy affects every American. And most of us agree that reforms are necessary. Coming to agreement on what effective reform looks like and how to implement it is much more difficult. The Florida Retail Federation believes that the debate should be focused on reform strategies that will uphold the principles of a free market system. Encouraging competition – between health care providers and between insurance companies – will accomplish what competition always does: provide good quality at good prices. On behalf of Florida's retail industry I offer the following suggestions, which we believe will aid in shaping a successful debate on reform:

- Remove mandates from insurance policies. Allow individuals and families to purchase insurance that is free from the cost of covering every ailment from Arthritis to Xenophobia. Families should have the ability to work with their insurance agent to select the most appropriate coverage for their needs, and pay accordingly.
- Eliminate the "fee for service" reimbursement methodology. Replace it with payment for "episodes of care." This type of approach will incentivize doctors to develop and adopt best practice standards for the treatment of critical care episodes, as well as chronic diseases.
- Recognize that another Public Plan is simply not the answer. We already have two, Medicare and Medicaid. Neither is financially stable.
- Reward individuals for adopting a healthy lifestyle. In other words, allow discrimination. Individuals who do not smoke and who are at a healthy weight should be rewarded with lower premiums, lower deductibles, and lower co-payments.
- Remove artificial price points. The government setting a Medicaid reimbursement of \$51.75 for the surgical removal of a foreign body is no more realistic than a hospital charging a private payer \$14.81 for one Ibuprofen.
- Educate patients on the benefits of properly utilizing prescription drugs and adhering to their medication therapy. Research has shown that medication adherence is the single most effective way to reduce health care costs in patients with chronic conditions.
- Encourage and incentivize the use of Electronic Medical Records. There are numerous benefits to utilizing EMR's, which aid in the seamless integration of a patient's health care providers and therefore ensure better outcomes.

This issue is far too critical to become victim to partisan jabs and lines drawn in the sand. If Industry leaders and stakeholders believe the options before us now will not work, they must step up to the plate and offer real, meaningful alternatives.