

Health CARE Act

Measure embodies principled, consensus approach to provide health insurance coverage to all Americans, and creates incentives for prevention and coordinated care through a medical home

May 16, 2007 (WASHINGTON): The American College of Physicians (ACP) this morning commended Marcy Kaptur and Steven C. LaTourette, members of Congress, for their bipartisan sponsorship of the Health Coverage, Affordability, Responsibility and Equity (CARE) Act.

The endorsement was made by ACP president David C. Dale, MD, FACP at a Capitol Hill news conference. The co-sponsors, who outlined their proposal at Wednesday's news conference, introduced their measure to coincide with ACP's annual Leadership Day on Capitol Hill. Representatives Kaptur and LaTourette, who are both from Ohio, noted that the Act is based in large part on a proposal by the American College of Physicians.

Dr. Dale said he appreciated legislation that will "translate many of ACP's policies and principles to provide health insurance coverage to all Americans." This, he said, will be done by seven means:

- states will have the option to redesign their health care delivery programs to emphasize prevention, care coordination, quality, and the use of health information technology through the Patient-Centered Medical Home;
- states will be given new options to extend health insurance coverage to low-income working Americans, without imposing unfunded mandates on financially strapped state treasuries;
- advance, refundable tax credits will be made available to uninsured working Americans with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level;
- the tax credit will provide a premium subsidy equal to what the federal government now provides to its own employees;
- tax credit recipients will have the options of buying coverage through state purchasing group arrangements modeled after the federal employees health benefits program, giving them the same types and variety of health plan options now available only to federal employees, or from qualified non-group insurers;
- small employers will have new options for obtaining coverage, including having access to the variety and types of health plans offered to federal employees; and
- an expert advisory commission will recommend essential benefits that participating health plans will be encouraged to offer, as well as ways to expand coverage to those with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level.

The Health CARE Act differs in philosophy and substance from past, failed reform efforts in that it relies on choices, competition and financial incentives for state, small employers, insurers and individuals to make affordable coverage available to all Americans. Representatives Kaptur and LaTourette pointed out that it is not a "one size fits all" plan of government mandates and price controls.