First Stab at Healthcare Reform Gets Nods in WA

Local News

Posted by: Anonymous

Posted on : July 16, 2009 at 4:40 am

SPOKANE, Wash. - The Senate Health Committee's approval of a plan to require people to get health insurance

Ingrid McDonald, advocacy director with
AARP Washington
, says her group is especially concerned about people ages 50 to 64, as older workers are being laid off but are still ye

"Here in Washington, for example, insurance companies can charge people in higher age brackets 3.75 times as much

The new bill still would allow insurance companies to charge older people more for insurance, but limits the difference to no more than twice what younger people are charged. *AARP* says it can live with that. However, the vote was 13 to 10, strictly along party lines. Republicans insist the proposal would raise costs by requiring that people be insured.

Physician Glen Stream, Spokane, sits on the board of the *American Academy of Family Physicians*. He wants to see a greater emphasis on keeping people healthy and covering preventive care. He says an estimated 75 percent of medical costs go to treating just a few chronic conditions, including asthma, diabetes and depression.

"By having a more coordinated and proactive treatment strategy for chronic illness, I hope we can save some of the costs involved in delaying or having sub-optimal care."

The new bill, called the "Affordable Health Choices Act," would require insurance companies to offer coverage no matter what a person's medical history or past claims, and it also would require coverage of some preventive care. Only the Democrats on the Senate committee voted for it; Republicans called it "too expensive."

The "Divided We Fail" coalition partners are *AARP*, *Service Employees International Union* (SEIU) and *National Federation of Independent Business* (NFIB).