

State Lawmakers Step Up for National Health Care Debate

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Almost 1,000 state lawmakers, including 64 from Washington, have signed a petition asking their f

No matter what Congress ultimately decides to do to reform the health care system, they say, the states are going to b

Senator Karen Keiser, a Democrat from District 33, is one of more than 60 legislators from Washington who signed the petition. She also chairs the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee in Olympia.

"We'd like to have a little lighter load, because our health care budget has gone from 11 percent of the state budget to one-third, since I've been in the legislature - and that means it crowds out education. That's just not acceptable."

Keiser believes the Washington Basic Health Plan is a good model for federal reform, although the state budget crisis has forced cuts that now have 60,000 people on the waiting list for coverage. That underscores the need for reform, she adds.

Keiser plans to visit "the other Washington" next week to deliver the message to Congress as part of a delegation of state and local lawmakers. She disagrees with those who say a public insurance plan is off the table.

"I don't think it's dead at all. It's gonna be rough and tough to get a full, robust public option in this bill out of the Senate; the House is very supportive. The real key will be in the conference committee, after the Senate and the House pass their individual bills."

Keiser says all the members of the House and Senate Health Care committees in Olympia signed the petition, as well as Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown and House Speaker Frank Chopp. It can be viewed online at www.progressivestates.org.