

# THE GREEN WIRE

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## **Sen. Green Proposes Banning State Health Insurance for Lawmakers**

Jefferson City, MO – A bill to be heard in committee tomorrow would prohibit state legislators from receiving taxpayer-funded health insurance which would save Missouri almost \$1 million per year.

SB 151, sponsored by Sen. Tim Green (St. Louis), will be heard at 2 PM on Wednesday, February 2, by the Small Business, Insurance and Industrial Relations Committee in SCR 1.

Sen. Green said that in light of the Governor's recent proposals to throw thousands of Missourians off Medicaid and to close assisted living centers such as Bellfontaine Habilitation Center in St. Louis, it would be hypocritical for lawmakers to continue receiving tax-subsidized health insurance.

“As lawmakers, we have no right to health care services that we deny to thousands of hard-working citizens,” Green said. “If the state budget is so tight that we have to cut 122,000 working men and women off from the only health care they have, then we as legislators should be willing to make the same sacrifice.”

SB 151 prohibits state senators and representatives from receiving any state health insurance, with a delayed effective date of January 1, 2006. According to the Missouri Consolidated Health Care Plan, adopting the proposal would save the state about \$825,000 during the first year alone.

Sen. Green pointed out that Missouri's is a “citizen legislature” meaning many legislators hold outside employment which already offers private health insurance. “Why should they ask for assistance from a state government that is so strapped for money it wants to deny assistance to people who really need it?”

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Sen. Green said under the Governor's proposals, at least 89,000 people will be completely cut off from Medicaid services in the first year. This round of cuts will affect seniors, disabled workers and working parents. Another 23,000 will have increased costs and potential limitations to their benefits, and 10,000 will move to other categories of Medicaid and we have no idea how it will affect them.

In total, 122,557 Missourians will be affected by these cuts. They will lose primary care, hospital care, prescription drug coverage and preventative care. The only alternative for these individuals will be to use emergency rooms, which are already grossly overburdened; the few primary care free clinics that still exist or physicians that see people for free.

In addition, the Blunt administration is eliminating dental, podiatry, rehab and specialty services, which will affect 900,000 Missourians or more.

Other proposed cuts include the following: Closing Bellefontaine Neighbors Habilitation Center in St. Louis, which may leave 350 severely mentally retarded children with no place to go; 172 psychiatric beds will be eliminated; and programs such as Alzheimer's research, pre-school educational programs, independent supported living sites, adoption subsidies, mental health services, Vietnam veterans' scholarships, homeland security, Grandparents as Foster Parents and Nurses for Newborns will be severely cut or eliminated altogether.

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