COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia slowly but anxiously analyzes health care legislation

MU MENTION on Pg. 2

By Anne Christnovich, Nicole Lebsack
March 23, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – With the historic passage of health-care reform legislation by the U.S. House of Representatives on Sunday, Columbia residents began asking Monday about its impact.

Although the bill still must be signed by President Obama, and reconciled in the U.S. Senate, some relevant numbers have been calculated.

Missouri's 9th Congressional District, which includes Columbia, could see the following outcome, according to a report compiled by the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce:

- **36,000** uninsured residents could get coverage;
- Up to **61,000** young adults could be covered under their parents' insurance policies;
- **96,000** residents with pre-existing conditions will be guaranteed the option of insurance coverage;
- Medicare will be improved for up to **105,000** recipients;
- Tax credits and other assistance will be given to up to **185,000** families and **15,500** small businesses to make coverage more affordable;
- Health insurance coverage will improve for **428,000** residents; and
- Uncompensated hospital and other health care provider costs will be reduced by **$79 million** annually.

If enacted, some portions — such as allowing individuals to be covered under their parents’ health care plan until age 26 — could take place within the next six months.
But many of the changes — including universal coverage and small-business insurance pools, won’t be in full effect until 2014.

Mike Paden, associate vice president of employee benefits for MU, said his office is in the process of evaluating the new legislation.

He said he expects it could take some time to process the 2,000-page document. As legislation is compared to current MU benefits, he said, appropriate changes will be made.

Kris Hagglund, associate dean of health professions at MU, suggested that the bill, when enacted, may improve the position of health-care providers.

The influx of nearly 30 million people getting insurance by 2014 might allow providers to receive payment for services previously written off as charity care.

"Many providers now provide care for free for the uninsured," Hagglund said. "Now they'll have an increased number of patients who will be insured, and they (health care providers) will get paid for services.

Another issue is the ratio of health-care providers to those demanding it. There will be a growing disparity between the number of providers and their patients, he said.

The best way to address it is to prepare more students to graduate in health-care professions.

The Caring for Missourians Initiative has been a collaborative effort among two- and four-year public schools to provide state funding to increase the number of graduating health care professionals.

It will increase the number of health-care professionals entering the Missouri market in the next few years, he said, but it was part of the federal stimulus package and may not be renewed.

"Right now, we don't have an adequate number of primary-care providers to meet the demand," he said. "Any initiative to increase general providers and specialty providers is important and will be meaningful."

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The legislation could shift the cost burden from one group to another, said Brant Butler, director of the Missouri Insurance Coalition.

"Some will be winners and some will be losers," Butler said. "I don't know who will be winners, but young people will definitely be losers."

He said covering pre-existing conditions and doing away with traditional rating systems will defer high insurance costs to the young.

"If a 25-year-old and a 65-year-old are rated the same, or not rated at all, it means that the 65-year-old will be using more money from the insurance company but the 25-year-old will be paying more to foot the bill," he said.

By 2014, insurance providers will be prohibited from denying individuals with pre-existing conditions health care coverage. While it will benefit some of the 36,000 uninsured residents in Missouri, it could become costly for Missouri insurance companies.

Even when the choice becomes an ultimatum between choosing to buy health insurance or pay an annual penalty fee, Butler said young people could opt to pay the penalty rather than purchase a policy.

"Young people can't really do anything to prepare now," Butler said. "They can either buy insurance now and save money in case they're injured, or they can buy it later. Either way, costs for the young could go up."
House votes to overhaul student loans

Savings will go into Pell Grants.

NO MENTION

Monday, March 22, 2010

WASHINGTON (AP) — Riding the coattails of a historic health care vote, the House yesterday also passed a reorganization of college aid that affects millions of students and moves President Barack Obama closer to winning another of his top domestic policies.

The bill rewrites a decades-old student loan program, eliminating its reliance on private lenders and uses the savings to direct $36 billion in new spending to Pell Grants for students in financial need.

In the biggest piece of education legislation since No Child Left Behind, the bill would give more than $4 billion to historically black colleges and community colleges.

The bill was paired with the expedited health care bill, which helped the prospects of each measure. The combined measure passed 220-211.

"We are pairing this historic health reform with another opportunity that cannot be missed — the chance to make the single largest investment in college affordability ever at no cost to the taxpayers," said Rep. George Miller, D-Calif.

The Senate will take up the bill under the same expedited rules used for health care legislation. That means the Senate can pass the measure by a simple majority.

House lawmakers passed the bill last year, but in the Senate it did not have 60 votes to overcome a near-certain filibuster. By riding shotgun on the fast-track health care bill, the legislation now can avoid that obstacle.

Still, Obama won't get the Pell Grant expansion he initially sought. Congressional Democrats had to trim their original spending plans when the 10-year savings realized by switching to direct government loans dropped from $87 billion to $61 billion.

Private lenders have conducted an all-out lobbying effort against the bill, arguing it would cost thousands of jobs and unnecessarily put the program in the hands of the government.
America’s Student Loan Providers, a trade group representing lenders, called for the Senate to reject the measure. “This is not the final chapter,” the group said in a statement. “The Senate now has the historic opportunity to pass health reform — without eliminating thousands of jobs and critical student services.”

Under the college lending program, financial institutions provide college loans at low interest rates, the government guarantees the loans in the event of default and subsidizes private lenders when necessary to keep rates low.

“By moving to the federal government’s direct loan program, we will put the best interests of students first and make college loans more reliable and affordable,” said Rep. Ruben Hinojosa, D-Texas, the chairman of a House higher education subcommittee.

In addition to using the $61 billion in savings from that change for Pell Grants and higher-education institutions, the legislation would direct about $19 billion for deficit reduction and to offset expenses in the health care bill.

Besides increasing Pell Grants, the bill provides $1.5 billion to make it easier for student borrowers to repay their loans. Beginning in 2014, borrowers would be allowed to devote no more than 10 percent of their monthly income to repay student loans. The cap now is 15 percent.
Diversity fee carryover causes concern

Groups funded by the diversity fee want to control allocation.

By Kaylen Ralph
Published March 22, 2010

A fee that funds minority student groups has faced carryover since its inception, and members of those groups say it's because of miscommunication and misallocation.

The Missouri Students Association passed legislation this month that maintains the fee amount — a recommendation from the Student Fee Review Committee that came without consulting the groups that receive the fee.

The fee, which every student pays $3.19 to maintain, covers all minority organizations on campus. Those organizations include the umbrella organization Four Front, the Legion of Black Collegians, the Hispanic American Leadership Organization, the Asian American Association and Triangle Coalition. Since it was first charged in fall 2007, the Student Fee Review Committee has never recommended an increase or decrease of the fee.

Legislation that maintains the fee was drafted by SFRC and passed through the Missouri Students Association last month as one of many resolutions regarding student fees.

In addition to maintaining the fee, the resolution documents SFRC's plans to review the consistent carryover associated with the fee.

But this clause has certain student organizations covered by the fee concerned for the future. Four Front Co-Chairwoman ChaToyya Sewell, a columnist for The Maneater, said she attributes the consistent carryover to the novelty of the fee.

"When we got the fee, there wasn't the institutional knowledge to spend it immediately," Sewell said. "There wasn't the infrastructure in place to suddenly spend $18,000, which is why we had carryover the past two years. Because we had to learn how to spend it, we could spend it on things that are crap, or we could try to learn how to spend it properly, which is what we did."

Before the fee was implemented, individual groups were responsible for finding their own funding, resulting in low operating budgets. Sewell said Four Front might get $300 a semester from various organizations, such as the Multicultural Center. Four Front now has a total expenditure of $24,952 for the past fiscal year.

Sewell said Four Front has gotten better at spending the money and does not anticipate carryover for this year. She said the main priority now is to make sure the fee is not lowered.

"We've gotten to a point where we've gotten the infrastructure to spend what we have, and we don't want it lowered," she said. "That's our primary concern."

Matt Sheppard, MSA budget committee chairman and SFRC co-vice chairman, said SFRC would investigate the fee and its carryover by meeting with all groups covered by the fee to see how they use it.
"Of course if money is there, people are going to say they're going to use it," Sheppard said. "But if they're not using it, it's one of those things like, 'Why are we charging students for it?'"

Both Sewell and Triangle Coalition President Erin Horth expressed concern over the responsibility MSA has regarding the approval and denial of SFRC's recommendation regarding the fee each year.

"There's a huge problem with allowing the majority organization, MSA, to allocate funds for the minority," Horth said. "We're concerned about the possibility of the diversity fee maybe being diminished at some point. I don't know if that would happen, but if the majority were to have the vote on minority rights there's no way to ensure that (the diversity fee) would stand."

Sheppard said no one from the various diversity groups approached him regarding consultation concerning the legislation. Sewell and Horth said no one communicated with them either. Sewell was asked by MSA President Tim Noce to go over the bill to point out mistakes in the listed percentages. In addition to misallocations, organizations no longer in existence, such as Four Directions, were slotted to receive a percentage of the funds listed as covered by the fee.

"Last semester, we were asked as groups of Four Front to submit budgets and carryover and to explain why we had carryover," Sewell said. "We were supposed to be brought in front of SFRC to defend those decisions, but we never were."

Sheppard said SFRC used prior legislation when drafting new bills and the error was most likely due to copying old information without checking it.

Sewell said the misinformation and lack of communication or consultation regarding its passage is somewhat indicative of the relationship between MSA and Four Front.

"It is an incredibly patronizing relationship at times, to be honest," Sewell said. "We're not consulted sometimes when we should have been, obviously like with this bill. I mean, essentially some of our projects have been appropriated by MSA, except that they don't understand the issues or the progress that we've made over several years."

This isn't the first time a lack of communication with minority student groups has caused confusion about the diversity fee. In 2008, the Department of Student Life diverted $30,771 from the fee to pay for new equipment without telling the groups that receive the fee.

Sewell and Horth both said they would like the organizations funded by the fee to be responsible for the allocation. Horth said some organizations are allocated too much of the fee while others, such as Triangle Coalition, are not given enough and dividing or sharing money could work better. For instance, Horth estimates 10 percent of students on campus are in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, but it only gets 5 percent of the diversity fee. That's compared to groups like HALO, which gets 15 percent of the fee when, according to 2009 fall enrollment records, about 2.2 percent of the campus is Hispanic.

"As of right now, some of us are going over budget, and some of us are struggling to spend it all," Horth said. "I think if we could work on dividing it up equally, we could probably do a lot more co-programming."

HALO Vice President Liz Reed said HALO is allocated too much and it could do with a smaller operating budget. She attributes this to being used to working with a lot less money before. She said the organization is unsure of how to spend its funds effectively to benefit the whole campus.

"There's so many guidelines about how we can use the money, and that really inhibits us," Reed said. "Sometimes there's an unclear line of if we can use it for an idea or not."
Faculty Council, Registrar examine myZou issues

Some students who should be dropped from classes are failed instead.

By Jared Grafman
Published March 23, 2010

Faculty Council is working with the University Registrar to correct technical problems with myZou's grading system.

"We're working with Brenda Selman, the Registrar, on ways of eliminating problems associated with students being failed, because they don't show up to a class that they're registered for but never attend and assume that they have been dropped," Faculty Council Chairwoman Leona Rubin said. "These are just technical types of things we're working on."

One of the issues of the system is some students who should be dropped from classes they never attend are not dropped and fail the course.

"Right now, a student who is registered for a class and never shows up to the class has to be dropped from the class," Rubin said. "Somebody needs to do that."

Selman said there is a hierarchal system to successfully drop a student from a course due to absences.

"If a student has not met the requirements for attendance, the faculty member notifies the dean's office, who in turn notifies us if the drop meets their approval in accordance with policies," Selman said. "We then drop the student."

Selman said the faculty handbook contains policies related to dropping students for absences, and she doesn't believe the system is in need of a change.

"Students are not dropped unless (the process) has been completed," Selman said. "Therefore there is no need to alter the myZou system."

Rubin said Faculty Council and the Registrar's office are working together to fix potential holes in the reporting system.

"We're still trying to work out exactly what the Registrar needs and what we can do with the faculty handbook that allows her to correct these issues," Rubin said. "There's not much to say at the moment except we're working with her to fix that situation."

Exactly whose responsibility it is for notifying the Registrar of being dropped from the course is an area of confusion.

"It's not always clear whether it's the faculty's responsibilities, the student's responsibilities or who notifies the registrar," Rubin said. "Those are just technical things we're trying to do. We're trying to find an electronic way to do it."
Faculty Council has not yet come up with a solution for ensuring students are appropriately dropped from courses, Rubin said.

"But that is something we're working on with the registrar, for students who are in a class but don't plan to go to the class and don't realize they are still registered," Rubin said.
Minority Census Social promotes participation

The event, sponsored by multicultural groups, aimed for census education.

By Mary Novokhovsky
Published March 23, 2010

Monday's Minority Census Social hosted by Four Front and numerous multicultural organizations discussed the importance of minority groups completing the census form.

The social was held in Stotler Lounge, and guests were encouraged to grab a plate of food while listening to a series of census-related announcements and speeches. At the end of the event, a member of MU's Hispanic American Leadership Organization performed a Colombian dance for the crowd.

Sponsors present at the social included MU's Asian-interest sorority Alpha Phi Gamma, HALO, the South Asian Student Association, the Filipino Student Association, the Asian American Association and Missouri Students Association Multicultural Issues Committee.

Speakers from the Census Bureau were also in attendance to answer questions and encourage students to pass on the message to family and friends that minority participation is crucial.

Census Bureau Assistant Regional Manager Craig Best said the event was important because it brought people together to spread the positive message of census participation.

Best said he wants to pass on the word that everybody counts.

"Historically we undercount minorities," Best said. "It's important that we get the count right. If you don't get it right you live with an incorrect count for 10 years."

Annually, $400 billion is allocated across the country based on census results, so it's important for minority groups to let the government know they're out there, Best said.

Sophomore Alvin Duong said the event was beneficial because it communicated the message that undercounting of minority groups should not be the norm.

"As a group we want to make a stand," Duong said. "We want to make sure that there are more Asians and minorities accounted for than in 2000."

Four Front Co-Chairwoman Yantézia Patrick said the census was important to her because it helps acknowledge the diversity in the Columbia area.

Patrick said the event was also important for Columbia in particular because the upcoming redistricting in the state of Missouri will depend on census results.

Sophomore Lakeisha Williams said the main goal for minorities to fill out their census forms should be better representation.

"There's no guarantee that filling out the census is going to make things better for minorities but at least you're doing your part," Williams said. "Columbia is redistricting so it's important to not get jaded lines."
Census Bureau worker Alonzo Surrette said the census results are key in showcasing the more specific aspects of diversity in the country.

Surrette said it is important people specify their race and ethnicity because the census is there to represent everyone. "Everyone in this country deserves to be respected for who they are," Surrette said.

This year's census is the 23rd in American history. The census is the largest non-military task the government undertakes and the largest mobilization of workers in the country, Best said.

Surrette said students living in apartments should have already received a census form and those living in residence halls should expect to receive forms after spring break. He said the form should be filled out according to the student's place of residence, and they should not be accounted for back home.

AAA President Kha Ly said he hoped the event would successfully help spread the message of the census' importance to minority communities.

"The government needs to know we're here," Ly said.
Letter to the Editor:

Tiger Watch works with MUPD to create a safe campus

By Josh Travis, Tiger Watch superintendent
Published March 23, 2010

Envisioned as a service for the University of Missouri Family, Mizzou TigerWatch stands as a new, student volunteer program in pursuit of a safe campus at the University of Missouri. While the program won't be fully operational until this Fall, already there has been a lot of misguided dissent to this program who's goal is nothing more than to keep students safe.

First, let's talk about what TigerWatch is not. WE ARE NOT POLICE OFFICERS, NOR ARE WE VIGILANTES. While we have adopted the rank and organization model of the Missouri State Highway Patrol, we are not a "student army." Our volunteer officers do not have arrest powers, they will not be armed or intervening in active crime situations, and they are not a secret policing force that is out to snitch on students.

No, our concern is the safety of those on campus. What makes students vulnerable to late night attacks are situations when they are walking alone and there is nobody else around. These are always the time when many students say they don't feel safe. Our job is to be around-to be that third party presence-so you don't have to worry about whether you are sale or not.

With the motto of 'Semper Vigila' and in full partnership with the University of Missouri Police Department, TigerWatch aims to spread to students the message 'Always Be Watchful' and to serve the following mission: 1) Establish regular nightly patrols and a walk home service on the Mizzou campus to serve as a safety resource of third party presence for pedestrians and to prevent and report crimes in progress to MUPD; 2) Create, in partnership with MUPD, dedicated neighborhood watch communities amongst residential communities on campus; and 3) In partnership with MUPD, provide all MU students with the education to help prevent themselves from becoming victims of criminal activity.

What was once just a vision of mine has, in no small part, been made a reality because of the commitment of our student leaders in the MSA Senate. Thus, many thanks goes to the following Senators for standing in support of student safety and the TigerWatch Pilot Act of 2010: Speaker Evan Wood, Garrett Bergquist, Dan Cook, Doug Cowing, Taha Hameduddin, Sean Haynes, John Henry, Michelle Horan, Jasmin James, Claire Kates, Dan Kelley, Mahir Khan, Ian Krause, Blake Lawrence, James Minor, Justin Mohn, Tyler Ricketts, Roman Shmulevich, Lauren Towns, Samantha Ware, and Clayton Zak.

When it comes to keeping our campus safe, we students have a partnership role to play with MUPD and those whose job it is to keep us safe-TigerWatch intends to fulfill it. If you are interested in getting involved with TigerWatch, email us at mutigerwatch@hotmail.com or check out our Facebook Page.
An initiative petition drive has already made the St. Louis earnings tax a hot topic at City Hall. Now, the debate is heating up inside the halls of academia, too.

In one corner is Joseph Haslag, of the University of Missouri and the Show-Me Institute, whose 2007 study is often cited by opponents of the earnings tax. Haslag found that the tax is a damper on economic growth because it discourages companies from opening within the city limits.

His challenger is St. Louis University's Jack Strauss, who recently did a regression analysis on 30 years of data from more than 100 cities. Strauss found that the earnings tax has no effect on income growth.

This doesn't quite rise to the level of an academic smackdown. The economists have debated each other on a Kansas City radio station, but for the most part their tone is polite and technical.

Strauss approaches the earnings tax as a statistical question. Using some standard techniques, such as including a variable for each city's beginning level of personal income, he runs a regression and finds that the earnings tax makes no statistically significant difference in growth rates.

That makes sense, Strauss says, because earnings taxes tend to be imposed by manufacturing-intensive cities in the Northeast and Midwest. Thirty years ago, these places tended to be wealthier than cities in the South and West.

"It's really a catching-up story," he says. "In middle age, you grow slower. These (earnings tax) cities tend to be older, and tend to be more unionized."

Haslag admits that Strauss' analysis is more sophisticated than his own. However, he says, that doesn't make it the right approach.

Haslag's 2007 paper starts with a simple observation: Cities that impose earnings taxes have lower income, relative to their suburbs, than cities that don't. He then constructs an economic model to explain this, based on theories about how companies respond to incentives.

"His methodological approach is so different that it really doesn't challenge my model," Haslag says. "I'm dubious that he has the right regression. It's almost impossible to know what's driving income. You would have to specify a real good general equilibrium model to capture all the variables."

That's the economic argument in a nutshell: theory vs. statistics. Both economists have some
points that make sense intuitively, too.

In Haslag's model, capital is mobile. It gets invested where it can earn the greatest profit. It makes sense that firms could attract workers more easily in a zero-tax suburb than in a city that imposes a 1 percent earnings tax (plus, in St. Louis, a 0.5 percent tax on company payrolls).

Strauss counters that, in studies of where companies locate, taxes rank pretty low on the list of considerations. "Location theory suggests it's people, it's infrastructure, it's intangibles like climate or quality of life, and then next most important is ease of doing business," he says.

Perhaps we should be debating issues like government structure and red tape instead of debating the 1 percent earnings tax, Strauss suggests.

That, however, is the great thing about the anti-earnings-tax petition drive funded by Rex Sinquefield, founder and chairman of the Show-Me Institute. It has St. Louisans, including Mayor Francis Slay, talking about structural issues like city-county consolidation.

If economists like Haslag and Strauss can focus voters' minds on all the possible ways of moving the city forward — including, possibly, abolishing the earnings tax — then they'll have performed a valuable public service.