

## Colorado Health Care Poll Press Conference Talking Points (cont.)

### Dr. Lynn Parry, President, Colorado Medical Society

Good morning. I am Lynn Parry, and I am here today in my capacity as president of the Colorado Medical Society. I am a practicing neurologist in Denver.

The story behind these compelling responses from Colorado voters is that we have reached a political tipping point that state policy makers and candidates for state office should recognize and embrace. As the poll finds:

- ***Few voters believe that the conditions for children in Colorado have improved over the past five years. Only 16% of voters say conditions have improved for children and a greater number, 25%, say they have gotten worse.***

The voters have connected the dots between access to health care and the general physical and fiscal health of our state, and by overwhelming margins. My colleagues across our state emphatically agree with their patients.

The patients we see without insurance are employed, working Coloradoans. A majority of the nine million uninsured children in the U.S. live in households where at least one parent works full-time, year-round. Uninsured children are less likely to have a primary source of health care and often have fewer doctor visits compared with insured children. They have more unmet medical and dental needs than insured children.<sup>1</sup>

The uninsured among our fellow Coloradoans are escalating, especially among our children, and it is hidden tax we all pay. A growing body of research has come to similar conclusions across the country. Unpaid hospital bills, largely for the uninsured, are costing about \$45 billion nationally a year and adding about 8.5 percent to the cost of health insurance for those who do pay. Employers tell us that the rising cost trends are, in turn, adding to the growing numbers of people without insurance. And when those people check into hospitals, they generate even higher costs for those employers and consumers who pay insurance premiums.<sup>2</sup>

And, as the poll indicates, the voters get it. They are increasingly worried about the cost of care, and whether or not, even if they're insured, they will be destroyed financially by a catastrophic illness. Our poll found:

- ***68% of voters are satisfied with the quality of health care in Colorado and an equal number are dissatisfied with the total cost of health care, and***
- ***64% of people are concerned that they will not be able to pay their medical bills in an event of a serious illness.***

There is a clear consensus among those of us who provide medical care, and those whose children need that care, that it is time for all of us to come together and take care of our kids. Such action needs to be a collaborative effort among the private and public sectors, including federal and state policy makers.

Most of us don't choose to be sick or injured. Our children most certainly do not. The full measure of our worth as a society will be taken in how we care for our children. Together, we can restore and preserve the health and safety of this most precious resource, right here, and right now.

<sup>1</sup> See Families USA report, September 2005

<sup>2</sup> See studies by Milliman for the Blues in California and Washington State, using 2004 data