

WASHINGTON UPDATE

CONGRESSMAN ROB WITTMAN

March 28, 2008

Earlier this year I sent out a survey to constituents of the First District asking them to let me know what issues are most important to them. I felt that it was important to get some feedback from the people I serve about what's significant to them and what I should be doing up here in Washington to ensure that I am doing the best job I can. We've received a truly great response and I am excited to be able to use this information as I go about representing you in Congress.

Health care is one issue that a lot of people said they are concerned with. During our Easter work period, I decided to take some time to go out and meet with local health care providers and visit a few medical facilities so I could learn more about this critical issue.

We are blessed with the most advanced and innovative health care system in the world. Our medical professionals receive the best training and preparation available and are able to take advantage of cutting-edge technologies. In Virginia, and more specifically in the First District, we are fortunate to have many wonderful people who are highly qualified to provide excellent care and treatment and, as my visits taught me, are committed to doing so with respect and kindness.

But I also found that too many among us are unable to take advantage of these superior services. Increased affordability and accessibility are two goals that I believe we should be working towards. One of my visits was to the Grace Physical Therapy Clinic in Fredericksburg where I had the chance to meet with both patients and providers. What I learned was that while excellent treatment is available many are unable to take advantage due to costs or prohibitions imposed by either their private or public coverage.

One woman I met, Shirley Embrey, was receiving treatment at Grace Physical Therapy Clinic and was having great success. She did express her concerns however that her treatment may soon come to an end due to caps imposed by Medicare. This is an increasingly common problem, which is why I strongly believe that we need to closely examine policies that seek to reduce costs and be assured that they will result in long term affordable health care, and will insure that Medicare can remain solvent. By encouraging more access to private health care and allowing providers to effectively compete we can take a large step forward in increasing the number of insured Americans.

Additionally, I am hearing from a number of people that feel we should be very cautious of expanding into a government run health care system. Having a government run command and control health care system is not the most efficient way to assure access and affordability. More importantly many folks in the community tell me that families, not bureaucrats, should be making their medical decisions. Every family should have a fundamental freedom to receive medical care and to do so in a way that fits their needs and budget.

One of my top priorities is to be a leader in the fight to ensure all Americans can live long and healthy lives. I believe in the free market system, a system that has worked well in spite of a massive increase in the cost of working in the medical profession due in part to increased costs of medical malpractice insurance and medical technology. We must also look at improving access to preventive care as a part of the solution to this problem. But as we look for a fair and proportioned solution to this problem we must always keep in mind the average American family and remember our job is to serve them in the best and most efficient manner possible. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to continue my tour of medical facilities and speaking with medical service providers and patients in the First District and I look forward to learning more about this critical issue.