

Becky Lourey: A Principled Foundation For Health Care

I have a clear vision for the future of health care in Minnesota based on a core set of principles around which all of us can unite. It is a vision of inclusive and groundbreaking health care reform with the ultimate objective of a universal and affordable system that respects personal responsibility, choice, and the role of all stakeholders. I am the only candidate with a clear statewide plan that will make Minnesota a national leader in health care quality, cost control, and access. I am also the only candidate with the necessary experience to turn public policy goals into health care realities.

I. A Background in Health Care

For me, better health care is not merely a campaign promise. Much of my professional and legislative career has been focused on ensuring Minnesotans can receive the health care to which they are entitled. As a mother of twelve children, I know that few things are more important to families than knowing loved ones have access to preventive care and to quality care when injured or sick.

Providing health care to a large family in a rural area has never been easy. Many of my children had health challenges growing up, including one son who had multiple surgeries as a child and another who died during open-heart surgery. Through these experiences I learned that quality health care is a right--not a privilege--and should not be granted based on income, employment status, or the generosity of government. I soon became an advocate for universal health care, first at the local level with Duluth's Northern Lakes Health Care Consortium, and later as a co-chair of the Minnesota Public Health Association's Public Affairs Committee, a member of the Rural Health Advisory Committee, and an appointee to the state's first Health Care Access Commission.

With my husband, Gene, I own a profitable business that specializes in cost recovery for health care services delivered by public hospitals. It has been our company's policy to provide full medical, dental, and disability coverage for all of our 70 employees. We made a commitment that no one would be left behind. I realize how difficult it is for employers to make tough choices regarding payroll and benefits in an era of escalating health care costs and wavering bottom lines. I understand the challenges faced by businesses seeking to provide comprehensive medical benefits for their employees, and I realize that business competitiveness is an integral component of the pursuit for higher quality and lower costs. In Health Care Security Plan, businesses will neither be taken advantage of nor excluded. Businesses will thrive.

I went to the Legislature--first elected to the House of Representatives in 1990, and later to the Senate--seeking to apply what I had learned as a health care advocate, business owner, mother, and wife. I was compelled to use my life experiences to influence the public policy process and work for better health care for all

Minnesotans. The pursuit of health care reform has been difficult, needlessly partisan and obstructed by special interests. But we have had successes. I co-authored MinnesotaCare, one of the nation's first statewide health coverage programs. MinnesotaCare has been fiscally solvent and has provided affordable health care for thousands of working Minnesotans who otherwise would go without. I have also had the privilege to sponsor the Small Business Health Care Insurance Reform provisions, the Rural Health Initiatives, the Medication Therapy Management Act, and the Senior Prescription Drug Program. As chair of the Senate Health and Family Security Committee, I have authored many important health care reforms, and helped to prevent the passage of many regressions in health care access. But I want to do more to improve Minnesota's health care system, and that is one of the primary reasons I am running to be your next Governor.

II. The Health Care Problem

Our health care system is failing. It is failing our children and senior citizens, our employed and unemployed, and it is failing the foundation of our state economy—our employers. Today, we are further from universal health care access than we were three years ago. We live in one of the most prosperous states in the most powerful country in the world and yet we have failed to provide our citizens with the basic ability to maintain and improve their health. Each day the health care problem festers as the number of uninsured and underinsured people in our state increases.

The hardships experienced by individuals and families as a result of our dysfunctional health care system are inexcusable. The hardships experienced by our businesses and corporations, however, are more than that—they are putting our entire state at risk. If we do not act now, the enormous burdens our businesses bear as a result of high health care costs will leave our state at a significant disadvantage. There is no better social policy than creating living wage jobs, and a prosperous job market is seriously threatened by instability in the health insurance market. As a result of our failing health care system, Minnesota businesses are continuously at a competitive disadvantage in the global marketplace. Our companies are either being forced to cut health benefits to employees—often leaving them uninsured and dependent on government safety nets—or cut employees altogether. We cannot afford to leave our businesses fighting for survival against firms based in countries with more coherent health care policies.

When families suffer, Minnesota suffers. When businesses suffer, Minnesota suffers. By tackling the problem of health care in an effective, lasting way, we can improve Minnesota's business climate, attract jobs to our state, and make life better for everyone.

III. Values & Principles for a Healthy Minnesota

A new and improved health care plan for Minnesota must be defined by a core set of five values upon which all citizens can agree:



- **ACCESS:** All Minnesotans deserve access to high quality, continuous, and comprehensive care, regardless of income.
- **AFFORDABILITY:** Any health care reforms must be affordable for all stakeholders: individuals, businesses and government. Early intervention and preventive measures will avoid higher costs in the future. Cost-effectiveness can be maximized through the elimination of bureaucratic inefficiencies, waste and excess capacity, not through the obstruction of care. Through bulk purchasing, low costs for pharmaceuticals and other goods and services will be available to all providers.
- **QUALITY:** The system must ensure an adequate number of qualified health care professionals, facilities and services to guarantee timely access to quality care. Minnesota's leadership in medical research, technology and education should be maintained and expanded.
- **CHOICE:** Patients must be able to choose their own providers. Doctors and patients have the right to decide on medical treatments, not bureaucrats. Businesses and individuals must be allowed to choose what health plan best matches their needs.
- **COOPERATION:** The system must work for all stakeholders and not exclude anybody from the future of health care in Minnesota. Families, businesses, medical providers and the government all have an important role to play in successful health care reform.

These are the five core values that must form the foundation of Minnesota's health care future. The **Health Care Security Plan (HCSP)** illustrates how we will get there when I am elected Governor.