

YOUR VIEW

Medicaid expansion

It seems to me that Missouri legislators are intent on cutting off their noses to spite their faces. The only reason not to expand Medicaid coverage in Missouri is to send a message to Washington that you hate Obamacare.

Expanding Medicaid to 300,000 Missourians would improve state finances, bring in jobs, help hospitals (especially in the rural areas) and, most importantly, improve the health of poor Missourians.

Currently, Missouri pays the bulk of state Medicaid expenses. For example, 40,000 Missourians receive mental health care through Medicaid. One hundred percent of the cost is paid by the state. If we expand Medicaid, the state will only pay 10 percent. Expanding Medicaid will free up money for our state budget. State Medicaid expenses will actually go down if Medicaid is expanded.

Many studies have indicated that expanding Medicaid will bring in new high-paying health care jobs. The Chamber of Commerce supports Medicaid expansion.

Hospital subsidies will soon be cut by the federal government, but this money could be made up by the extra dollars that the hospitals will receive if more of their patients have Medicaid.

The care that these patients receive will be reimbursed by the expanded Medicaid payments. When patients

receive emergency care but have no money to pay for it, hospitals make up the difference by charging higher rates to patients who do pay. As a consequence, insured patients have higher health insurance premiums.

The most important reason to expand Medicaid is the 300,000 Missourians who will start getting health care that currently they cannot afford. Better health care makes more productive citizens.

Missourians are paying taxes that now are going to other states with expanded Medicaid. We deserve to have that money back in our state. Politicians in Jefferson City say they don't dare expand Medicaid because the federal government might not be able to keep up the 90 percent payment rate. I have never heard them voice a similar concern when they accept federal dollars for highways and education.

One can only conclude that legislators are sacrificing the health of real people for the sake of political ideology. Shame on them.

Mary Gaarder
Joplin