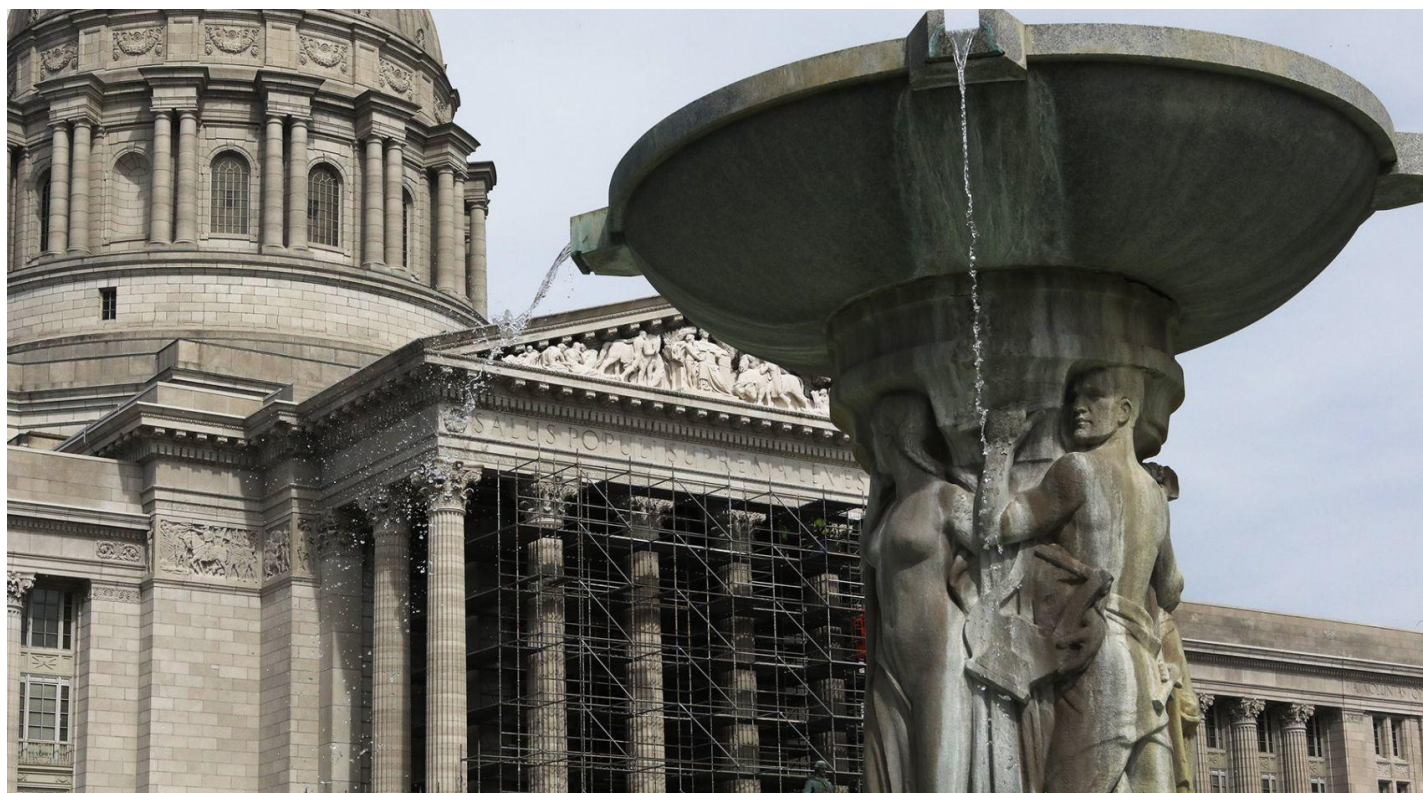


LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

http://www.stltoday.com/opinion/mailbag/bills-would-kick-missourians-off-their-health-care-coverage/article_a70b1726-85ee-5313-8041-f89c1068dd2c.html

Bills would kick Missourians off their health care coverage

Apr 21, 2018



The front of the Missouri State Capitol building, where dangerous decisions are being made while the state's attention is focused elsewhere.

Improve access to health care? Forget about it. The GOP-dominated Missouri House and Senate want to worsen the current state of care. Missouri lawmakers are proposing bills that would lead to Missourians losing their health care.

SB 562 would seek a waiver to convert Missouri's Medicaid program to a "block grant" program. Doing so would lead to immediate and worsening cuts to federal funding for Missouri's Medicaid program. These cuts would inevitably lead to cuts to care for the Missourians who rely on Medicaid, most of whom are children, people with disabilities and seniors.

In addition, SB 948 and HB 1856 seek to impose "work requirements" of at least 80 hours per month on Missourians who use Medicaid. People with disabilities, serious illnesses and substance-use disorders may be disproportionately likely to lose benefits. Fluctuating hours, causing one to fall below the threshold, are particularly common in the industry with the largest number of Medicaid enrollees: restaurant/food services.

Still other enrollees could lose coverage because they are between jobs even though they are actively seeking work, or because their disability, illness or substance-use disorder — while a serious obstacle to work — does not meet the specific criteria laid out. The real-life effect of these bills would simply be to kick Missourians off their coverage if they can't find a job.

As always, access to health care will be heavily affected by the state budget. Missouri lawmakers should resist any calls to save money in the state budget by cutting health care services for Missourians who have no other place to turn for care.

Ed Shew • Lake Saint Louis