

Opinion: Missourians Need Health Care, Not Political Games

By Guest - OCTOBER 9, 2018



By Jen Bersdale and Patricia Clinton

Missourians should be very concerned any time an elected official takes action to hurt hundreds of thousands of families. This is exactly what our Attorney General, Josh Hawley, did when he became a lead party in a lawsuit that would remove protections for the 2.5 million Missourians with pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes, pregnancy, cancer, sports injuries, asthma, and many more.

Attacking health care for Missouri families is bad. Trying to confuse, divide, and distract voters with political games is even worse, and Hawley has been busy doing just that. In fact, it seems Hawley will do anything to distract from his heartless attempt to put vulnerable Missourians back at the mercy of for-profit insurance companies.

Hawley is currently running an ad talking about his son's pre-existing condition, and advertising that he supports requiring insurance companies to "cover all pre-existing conditions." He's not saying, however, that he believes insurance companies must be required to cover all people with pre-existing conditions, and do so at a fair price. What he's really saying is that he cares deeply about his son – just not any of the other 259,326 Missouri children ages birth to 17 years with pre-existing conditions.

Perhaps Hawley's most cynical distraction tactic is his willingness to play into racist stereotypes of immigrant families in hopes of dividing voters. In a recent [op-ed](#), Hawley touts his family's Norwegian heritage and then accuses immigrants coming across "our southern border" of "bringing drugs and gangs" with them. This statement is nothing more than a callous attempt to perpetuate stereotypes of Hispanic people, mislead voters, and draw attention away from the real issues affecting Missourians, like health care. Hawley also supports the cruel anti-immigrant policies of the current administration, including separating children from their parents, which experts say will likely lead to lifelong trauma and mental health struggles.

In other words, Josh Hawley wants to protect his child, neglect citizen children, and actively harm immigrant children.

Hawley draws on factually untrue information to promote his anti-health care actions. He falsely [claims](#) that, since the Affordable Care Act was

introduced in 2009, “millions of Americans have lost their health care plans.” However, between 2013 and 2016 the percent of uninsured Missourians declined by **3.9 percentage points**. Nationwide, the uninsured rate fell 5.8 percentage points, a target Missouri could achieve by joining 33 other states and closing its coverage gap. Instead, Missouri is likely to see increasing numbers of uninsured people due to repeated attempts to gut or repeal the Affordable Care Act – endeavors backed by Hawley.

Earlier this month, NBC released a **poll** that shows that the most important issue for Missouri voters is health care. This is hardly surprising, given the profound impact health care – or the lack of it – can have on individuals and families. After years of public debate about the Affordable Care Act and other health policy issues, Missouri voters are more aware than ever that their access to health care is directly affected by the actions of their elected officials. Missourians need affordable and comprehensive health care coverage, and they know it. It is a disgrace that Attorney General is trying to eliminate the health policies that have helped hundreds of thousands of families in Missouri.

As the Senate race continues, and political tension rises, it’s important to remember that actions speak louder than words. For too long, politics have taken precedence over the health care needs of real people. We cannot allow politicians to strip us of our health care. Instead of scapegoating immigrant children and families, Josh Hawley withdraw from his lawsuit and focus on closing the Coverage Gap, making health

care affordable, and ensuring that insurance companies cannot discriminate based on pre-existing conditions. As an elected official, he should be working to ensure that everyone in the state of Missouri can get high-quality, affordable health care.

Patricia Clinton is a retired Nurse Practitioner and Nursing Educator, and a member of the Board of Directors of Missouri Health Care for All. Jen Bersdale is the Executive Director of Missouri Health Care for All.

Share this:



Guest