17B

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, over 46 million people in the United States (nearly 1 in 5) under the age of 65 lack health coverage;

WHEREAS, over 230,000 (nearly 1 in 3) El Paso residents are without health insurance;

WHEREAS, Texas has the highest number of residents without health insurance in the entire nation with over 5.8 million adults and 1.4 million children without health coverage;

WHEREAS, children and adults without health insurance are less likely to have access to more cost-effective preventative medical care such as annual doctor exams, medical screenings, routine check-ups, and are more likely to seek treatment in an emergency room;

WHEREAS, over 80 percent of people without health insurance in the United States come from working families who cannot afford the high cost of health coverage;

WHEREAS, insurance costs have increased 131 percent in the United States since 1999 while wages have only increased 38 percent during the same period;

WHEREAS, in 2008, over 1,000 people in El Paso declared bankruptcy due to health care costs;

WHEREAS, each year, over 5,000 El Paso seniors are subject to the Medicare "donut hole" and forced to pay for their prescription drugs in full and out-of-pocket;

WHEREAS, low reimbursement rates for health care professionals is contributing to the shortage of medical professionals in El Paso;

WHEREAS, the number of small businesses that offer health insurance to their employees has declined from 61 percent in 1993 to 38 percent in 2008 due to rising health care costs;

WHEREAS, since 1998, over $400,000,000 in local property tax dollars have been spent to help provide health care for those who could not afford to pay for treatment and services at University Medical Center of El Paso;

WHEREAS, El Pasoans with diabetes, tuberculosis, cancer, and other medical conditions are at risk of being denied coverage by insurance companies due to pre-existing conditions; and

WHEREAS, each year, thousands of El Pasoans are forced to seek medical care and prescription drugs in our sister city Juarez because they cannot afford to receive care and treatment in the United States.

09 SEP 21 AM 10:39
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NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL PASO, TEXAS:

THAT the Mayor and the City Council hereby urge the Congress and the President of the United States of America to enact health care reform legislation that would:

a. Provide an affordable option for health coverage for those individuals who are without health insurance;

b. Allow individuals to keep their existing insurance if they are satisfied with their coverage;

c. Reduce the long term-growth of health care costs;

d. Improve the quality of health care in the United States;

e. Prohibit insurance companies from denying coverage to anyone due to a pre-existing condition;

f. Place a cap on the amount of annual out-of-pocket expenses for policy holders so that no one will have to experience financial ruin due to medical bills;

g. Strengthen Medicare for seniors and preserve coverage for future generations;

h. Eliminate the Medicare "donut hole" for seniors;

i. Strengthen Medicaid for low-income Americans;

j. Improve reimbursement rates for health care providers to help attract and retain medical professionals in underserved areas such as El Paso;

k. Provide small business owners with financial assistance to help cover the cost of health insurance for their employees.

APPROVED this 22nd day of September 2009.

THE CITY OF EL PASO

John F. Cook
Mayor

ATTEST:

Richarda Duffy Momsen
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Sylvia Borunda Firth
Senior Assistant City Attorney

09 SEP 21 AM 10: 39
CITY CLERK DEPT.

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