

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA
**LEGISLATIVE
INTERIM BRIEF**



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WEEKLY INTERIM LEGISLATIVE BRIEF FROM NOVEMBER 19, 2003

Health Care

On Wednesday, the House Select Committee on Affordable Health Care for Floridians held its seventh hearing, and the last at which it would take public testimony.

Representative Frank Farkas (R-St. Petersburg), the select committee's chairman, noted in his opening remarks that the panel's members had yet to hear the one big idea that would solve the problem of lost access to affordable care. There is no silver bullet, however, for what ails our health-care system, in part because a system does not exist. Instead, the weaknesses that are causing double-digit growth in health-insurance premiums and a shrinking of the pool of those covered by insurance are arise from a few philosophical underpinnings over how health care should be funded. As a result of those beliefs, consumers of health care have become effectively shielded from the costs of the care they receive.

Reflecting on these concerns at the meeting was Guy Marvin, president of the Florida Insurance Council and spokesperson for the Florida Employers and Insurers Working Group on Affordable Health Insurance, of which AIF has been an integral part. Marvin presented the working group's goals and principles to the select committee members. The goals and principles, developed with the assistance of AIF staff in conjunction with other employer groups, form the basis for a complete report of recommendations that the group will present to the committee next week.

Representative Farkas urged the working group to be innovative, saying that he expected representatives of employers and insurers to provide leadership for long-term change.

At the beginning of the meeting Representative Farkas outlined his schedule for completion of the select committee's work. In January the committee will review and approve a report of findings, including an overview of all of the available policy options submitted to the committee. In February the committee will review the policy options one by one and decide on which should be included in proposed legislation.

Associated Industries will continue to monitor the work of the select committee and the Governor's Task Force on Access to Affordable Insurance as they develop policy recommendations in this key area. AIF lobbyists and consultants are working closely with both groups to develop innovative reforms that will create a vibrant and open market for health-care insurance.

Please send your comments or suggestions to us at aif@aif.com or call the Governmental Affairs department at (850) 224-7173.

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