

Blow to Colorado's nursing homes

Written by Greg Brophy, State Senator

While most people are focused on the big picture question of how we should reform our health care system, not enough attention is being paid to the particulars of what is currently being proposed. I'm concerned that a huge mistake is about to be made in a proposed cut to Medicare funding for nursing homes and patients.

Congress is proposing cutting Medicare funding for seniors in nursing homes by more than \$32 billion over 10 years. These cuts would be in addition to Medicare cuts of at least \$12 billion just imposed by the Obama Administration in July.

Many experts in the health care industry believe that the combination of these cuts is not only unsustainable but also will result in the loss of thousands of health jobs across Colorado at a time when we can least afford it.

I am positive that there are ways to improve this system. I know that reform is possible and necessary, but this isn't reform; it's methodically forcing rationing of health care for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Real reform would use market forces and personal responsibility to incentivize, where appropriate, alternative methods of long term care, especially home based. Nothing can be better than families working with their own, out of home for as long as possible.

There are many ways to increase access to health care. But why on earth would anyone want to cut \$32 billion in funding from nursing homes, money that is used to care for people who truly can't take care of themselves.

We could do some great deeds and truly reform our health care and insurance systems. Or, we can continue down a path that penalizes our nation's nursing home residents and those who provide their care. I know what I'd do and this isn't it.