



July 6, 2009

Michigan's efforts on fix for health care could beat U.S.

Legislators: We can't wait years for change

*BY PATRICIA ANSTETT
FREE PRESS MEDICAL WRITER*

Will Michigan beat President Barack Obama in passing health insurance reforms this year?

There's support in Michigan's Legislature for eliminating insurance practices that deny coverage and charge high rates for people with chronic health problems.

But the Michigan reforms face a tight timetable as lawmakers focus on the state's worsening budget crisis.

State Rep. Marc Corriveau, D-Northville, sponsor of a Democratic plan, said Michigan can't wait for federal reforms that would take four years to fully implement. As unemployment rises in Michigan and thousands lose workplace benefits, "the problem only is going to get worse," he said.

State Sen. Tom George, R-Kalamazoo, sponsor of the Republican bills, rated chances of getting legislation passed this year as "fair to good."

His plan would require businesses -- including self-insured enterprises such as General Motors Corp. and Chrysler Group LLC, now exempt from state regulations, -- to pay to expand health care for poor people.

The Detroit Regional Chamber and others oppose new taxes in the Senate plan, particularly when so many businesses are hurting.

But if Michigan doesn't require business to help pay for new programs, it will help fewer people and lose federal matching money, George said.

"Why wouldn't we want the government-run General Motors and Chrysler to help us with this problem?" he asked. "It's aimed at their former employees."

• **COMPARING THE PLANS:** [Key issues, solutions on health care](#)

Contact PATRICIA ANSTETT: 313-222-5021 or panstett@freepress.com
