

# Health Care Costs

## *Debate on Health Care Overhaul Expected To Peak in Late Summer*

**July 02, 2007**



**Picture of the California State Capital**

The Legislature and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) in late August likely will begin serious negotiations on a plan to overhaul California's health care system, the [\*Sacramento Business Journal\*](#) reports.

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez (D-Los Angeles) and Senate President Pro Tempore Don Perata (D-Oakland) last month merged their separate health care reform proposals into a single compromise bill.

However, the current version of the measure ([AB 8](#)) is not expected to pass into law, according to the *Business Journal*.

Negotiations this summer likely will focus on the combined legislation and how it compares to an overhaul plan by the governor that has not been introduced as legislation.

Herb Schultz, an adviser to Schwarzenegger, said, "We don't need a 'governor's bill' to get reform this year." He added, "All the ideas are on the table."

Beth Capell, a lobbyist for the Service Employees International Union, said a deal this year is likely as California has the opportunity to lead the nationwide debate on health care reform. Capell added that businesses would be more inclined to broker a deal with Schwarzenegger than with the next governor (Robertson, *Sacramento Business Journal*, 6/29).

### ***Study Critical of Health Care Reform Proposals***

None of the current health care reform proposals addresses important health issues in the San Joaquin Valley, according to a [study](#) released Thursday by the Central Valley Health Policy Institute at California State University-Fresno, the [\*Modesto Bee\*](#) reports (Carlson, *Modesto Bee*, 6/29).

The report examines Schwarzenegger's proposal, as well as four bills in the Legislature and a plan by the Assembly Republican Caucus (Boyles, [\*Fresno Bee\*](#), 6/29).

Compared with other regions in the state, the San Joaquin Valley has higher mortality rates from chronic illnesses, a higher unemployment rate and a larger population of undocumented immigrants.

These factors are affected by under funded public health systems, as well as a shortage of long-term care facilities and physicians.

The researchers recommended that lawmakers include certain provisions in their proposals to address health care issues in the valley, such as:

- Requiring insurers that sell high-deductible plans to charge affordable co-payments for primary care and screenings;
- Including standards for providing medical advice in different languages;
- Increasing Medi-Cal reimbursements and reducing paperwork to boost the number of physicians who accept Medi-Cal patients (*Modesto Bee*); and
- Allowing seasonal workers to contract with federally qualified health clinics or other safety-net providers to provide care (*Fresno Bee*, 6/29).

### ***Opinion Piece***

"The stars are in rare alignment this summer for state health care reform," George Skelton writes in his "Capitol Journal" column for the [\*Los Angeles Times\*](#). "There's not only desire in the Capitol, but demand among the public," he writes.

"Whatever ultimately passes, it must be produced this year," Skelton writes. Lawmakers "need to act. That means compromising and not shooting for the moon," Skelton writes (Skelton, *Los Angeles Times*, 7/2).

Original source:  
California Healthline