

Rhode Island Medical Political Action Committee

2004 General Assembly Candidate Questionnaire

Health insurance coverage Rhode Island traditionally does better than most of the country in the providing health insurance coverage to its citizenry. However, the numbers of the uninsured and underinsured are on the rise again in Rhode Island. We ask your opinion on a few of the options for addressing this worrisome trend.

1. Do you support a system of universal health care coverage for all Rhode Islanders? Yes No

If Yes, what would you consider the best means to achieve universal coverage? (Please circle one.)

- a. Create a government-based and –financed single-payer system.
- b. Provide tax breaks and financial incentives and require individuals and families to purchase health insurance.
- c. Provide tax breaks and financial incentives and require employers to purchase health insurance for their employees while expanding government programs to cover the unemployed.
- d. Other. (Please describe.)

2. Should state law require that all health insurance policies provide coverage for prescription drugs? Yes
No

3. A dominant feature of our health care system is a huge imbalance between the concentrated market power of insurance companies and the relative powerlessness of those who are closest to patients. Should lawmakers create a better balance in our health care system by providing health care professionals with a reasonable way of negotiating the terms of their relationship with insurance companies?

Yes No

4. a. Do you favor strengthening Rhode Island's Mental Health Parity Law to end discrimination by insurers against mental health professionals, compared with other similarly trained and qualified health professionals? Yes No
- b. Do you favor strengthening Rhode Island's Mental Health Parity Law to ensure that insurers cover an adequate range of mental health services? Yes No

Public health issues and policies

6. Do you favor greater restrictions on the sale and possession of firearms to individuals accused/convicted of domestic violence? Yes No

7. Do you support requiring individuals to purchase trigger locks when purchasing firearms? Yes No

8. Do you support allowing physicians to prescribe marijuana for patients suffering from certain diseases if evidence suggests that such patients can benefit from using marijuana? Yes No

9. Do you see any health care concern posed by the potential expansion of casino gambling in Rhode Island?
Yes No

Medical Liability Reform As you have read and heard, the availability of medical services is threatened by the rapidly rising cost of medical liability insurance. In the past 10 years, the cost of liability has more than doubled for the average Rhode Island physician. For many, the cost has more than tripled. The costs of defending and settling medical liability cases in Rhode Island are among the highest in the nation, and the Rhode Island process is the nation's slowest (6.4 years on average).

10. Do you think that the validity of a potential medical malpractice case should be verified by an independent medical expert before the case can be filed in court? (21 states currently have this requirement.)
Yes No

11. Do you think that meaningful medical liability reform could help control health care costs and improve patients' access to specialists by reducing the practice of "defensive medicine"? Yes No

12. Do you support placing a reasonable limit on the amount of awarded by courts for non-economic damages (i.e., damages that cannot be objectively quantified) as a measure to stabilize medical liability premiums?
Yes No

13. Because liability cases can take so long, settlements and payouts include interest going back to the beginning of the case. This is fair to both plaintiffs and defendants, -- as long as the interest rate applied is fair. In Rhode Island, the interest rate is frozen in law at 12%, by far the highest rate in the nation. Do you believe that Rhode Island should have a formula for setting pre-judgment interest at a rate that is always a fair reflection of actual economic conditions? Yes No

14. Would you support lowering the age at which a lawsuit may be filed on behalf of a minor (currently 18 years in Rhode Island, compared with the national average of 10 years) as a measure to control the rise of medical liability premiums? Yes No

15. Would you support legislation designed to speed up the legal process in order to deliver justice more quickly and reduce overall costs of litigation? (In Rhode Island it takes an average of 6.4 years to resolve a medical liability case, the longest in the nation; some states deliver justice to plaintiffs in half that time.) Yes No

FINALLY:

Please tell us what you consider to be the biggest health care issue facing the constituents of your district.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

NAME _____ DISTRICT _____

SENATE RESPONSES

X = Incumbent \$ = RIMS contributed to campaign

Y = yes N = no N/A = no answer

HOUSE RESPONSES

X = Incumbent \$ = RIMS contributed to campaign

Y = yes N = no N/A = no answer

