

Good morning. We are here to announce the formation of a joint task force on health care costs and quality.

This task force will be a partnership between my Administration and the Legislature, created to provide a thoughtful forum to deal with the huge challenges facing Minnesota's health care system.

Why are we doing this now?

The answer is easy.

Health care costs continue to rise at alarming rates –

- premiums are skyrocketing,
- consumers are too often left out of decisions, and
- there's no public consensus about what we want from our health care system and what we're willing to pay for.

At the same time, our economy is in flux, and health care costs are putting more and more pressure on our pocketbooks and budgets.

Although Minnesota is known for its leadership in health care, it's clear that our current system simply cannot take us into the future.

We need to reinstate Minnesota's leadership in health care by taking a long-term, thoughtful approach to solutions for the health care dilemma.

Certainly, my Administration and the Legislature have made important but limited progress in health care.

We have moved forward on expanding coverage for kids, closing racial and ethnic health status gaps, and investing in prevention strategies that can help to reduce future costs. We also started a healthy debate about regulatory reform and the need for more quality measurement.

While this is important progress, deeper reform of the system itself needs to happen.

It's clear that *alone*, we don't have all of the answers.

By joining together with the Legislature, and asking all stakeholders to contribute to solutions, I believe we can take the next steps and create some long-term, thoughtful proposals.

To get that outside input, I suggest that the Joint Task Force create a Community Advisory Group composed of policy leaders, providers, labor leaders, business owners and consumers.

This group will collect solutions and bring good ideas from some of Minnesota's experts to the Joint Task Force.

Former Senator Dave Durenberger, who heads the National Institute of Health Policy, is one of these experts. We need his and other experts' ideas on this issue.

But I'm not looking for quick fixes or simple answers.

These huge questions cannot be answered in time for this year's budget or next year's election. This is a long-term strategy, focused on meeting Minnesota's needs for years to come.

After all, quick fixes aren't the Minnesota way.

Minnesota has a tradition of solving big problems by taking a thoughtful, long-term approach.



Knee-jerk reactions won't get us anywhere, especially when it comes to a complicated health care system so important to our state.

I'd like to turn to our legislative partners. Both Senator Hottinger and Representative Fran Bradley have suggested to me that we create a joint health care task force. That's right – we all shared the same idea. What can I say.... great minds think alike.