LOUISIANA REPUBLICAN LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

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REPUBLICANS PRESENT HEALTHCARE INITIATIVES TO SECRETARY LEAVITT

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA --- Today, members of the Louisiana Republican Legislative Delegation met with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt to discuss healthcare reform in the Louisiana post-Katrina and Rita era. Delegation Chairmen, Senator Tom Schedler and Representative Tucker presented Secretary Leavitt with the Delegation's ideas for reform.

Said Schedler, "Our meeting with Secretary Leavitt has given me some renewed hope. I came away from the meeting feeling that the Secretary understands the immediate concerns and issues facing the state with regard to healthcare. He is willing to do everything in his power to make Louisiana a national model for healthcare."

Though the state faced a staggering healthcare crisis before Katrina and Rita, the opportunities now abound to correct these inadequacies. The Republican Delegation has made healthcare reform its number one priority for the current legislative session.

The Republican Delegation's initiatives to rectify the broken system are outlined in a letter to Secretary Leavitt.

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April 25, 2006

The Honorable Michael Leavitt, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

RE: Louisiana Healthcare Reform

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

As a follow up to our meeting today, the Republican Delegation collectively agrees that sweeping reform is needed in the area of healthcare. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have exacerbated a bad pre-storm situation to the point of crisis in the healthcare delivery systems across Louisiana. It is vital that the post-storm demographics of New Orleans and south Louisiana be recognized when contemplating changes in the state's delivery of healthcare.

Given our dire circumstances in healthcare, we are more than willing to offer Louisiana as a national pilot program for technological network systems with emphasis on preventive and primary care. The following are some issues we discussed today which will be critical to Louisiana's future healthcare initiatives:

1)   While long-term planning is being developed, short-term funding for uninsured patients and other healthcare demands should be more equitably allocated to non-state providers based upon services rendered.

2)   The future healthcare infrastructure should be decentralized and should be based upon local and regional partnerships with less dependency on the state as healthcare provider.

3)   We should utilize federally qualified health centers and request an expedited approval process.

4)   New models for providing medical education should be evaluated as part of the
        restructuring efforts. Specifically, we suggest leaving the educational
        components with LSU and carving out a community-based hospital system.

We view the present as an opportunity to fix Louisiana's broken healthcare system. Our Delegation is more than willing to look "outside the box" for alternatives to bring the citizens of Louisiana modern and effective care.   Further, we view your role as key to moving the state in the directional changes, through a statewide waiver that sets out the minimum criteria which you outlined with us. Keep in mind, Louisiana spends enough money currently; yet, we have some of the worst healthcare outcomes. Our system begs for radical and fundamental change. We constantly, in spite of the above, leave some $300 million of federal funds on the table (under cap.) because of lack of state match (or better put, lack of making healthcare a priority).

Thank you for allowing us the time to share our views and concerns in regards to Louisiana's healthcare system with you and your staff.

We look forward to working with you in the future.

Respectfully,

TOM SCHEDLER, CHAIRMAN   JIM TUCKER, CHAIRMAN
Senate Republican Delegation   House Republican Delegation