



Call to Action:
Solutions for Healthcare
in Michigan
Executive Summary

March 11, 2009



The Center for Health Transformation, in collaboration with MedImpact, Michigan State Representative Marc Corriveau, Michigan State Senator Tom George, and Henry Ford Hospital Systems, hosted a series of events titled, “Call to Action: Solutions for Healthcare in Michigan” on March 11, 2009.

Impact and Visibility:

• *Participants:*

- Speaker Newt Gingrich, Jim Frogue, and Melissa Ferguson met with House Speaker Andy Dillon, health policy chair Marc Corriveau, and other democratic leaders in Lansing. The main focus of the discussion was that changing health behaviors is the key first step before any progress can be made in health reform. The group brainstormed ideas including mandatory K-12 physical education and major tax incentives for good food in poor areas.
 - Also in Lansing, Gingrich testified for over an hour to a special session of Michigan Senate’s Health Policy Committee, led by Sen. George. Gingrich focused his remarks on incentivizing healthy behavior as a way to expand access to care and improve the health of Michigan’s citizens.
 - Twenty-nine individuals then met in Detroit for a roundtable discussion on the future of healthcare in Michigan. Participants included healthcare purchasers, providers, payors, and policy makers. Please see a full list of roundtable participants on the following page.
 - Individuals from CHT and MedImpact then traveled to the West Bloomfield Hospital, run by Henry Ford Hospital Systems. The center, which will officially open on Sunday, March 15th, uses a patient-centric model of care, bringing in fresh fruits and vegetables, free of chemicals and full of nutritional value.
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- ***Television and Newspaper coverage:*** The event was well-covered locally and picked up by the Associated Press – in total over 35 media outlets ran a story. The coverage focused on two specific stories –Gingrich’s testimony to the Michigan Senate Health Policy Committee and his visit to West Bloomfield, Henry Ford Hospital System’s newest hospital. At this pivotal time for the state, Gingrich, the Center for Health Transformation, and collaborating partners were able to contribute new and innovative ideas to the conversation on healthcare reform. Included in this document is a summation of the articles covering the event. Speaker Gingrich’s testimony to the Michigan Senate Health Policy Committee was also broadcast on local television.

Call to Action:
Solutions for Healthcare in Michigan
Participant List
March 11, 2009

Dawn Anderson

Vice President of Marketing Shared Services
MedImpact Healthcare Systems

Vernice Davis Anthony

President and Chief Executive Officer
Greater Detroit Area Health Council

Dale Brown

Senior Vice President
MedImpact Healthcare Systems

Kelly Crowe

Vice President of Business Development
Center for Health Transformation

Melissa Ferguson

Vice President of Operations
Center for Health Transformation

Jim Frogue

Project Director
Center for Health Transformation

Brett Furst

Vice President of Healthcare
Covisint

Newt Gingrich

Founder
Center for Health Transformation

Korey Hall

Detroit Regional Manager
Office of U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow

Fred Howe

President and Chief Executive Officer
MedImpact Healthcare Systems

Brian Klott

Senior Manager, Healthcare Strategy
Chrysler, LLC

Kate Kohn-Parrott

President
Strategic Health and Benefit Solutions

Timothy Lesneski

Group Vice President, Drug Stores, Pets, and Consumables
Meijer, Inc.

Marsha Manning

Director of Community Initiatives
General Motors Corporation

James Mault, MD

Director, Health Solutions Group
Microsoft

David McGuffie

President
Covisint

Debra Minich

Director, Government Programs Client Relations
MedImpact

Julie Novak

Executive Director
Michigan State Medical Society

Brian Peters

Executive Vice President of Association Strategy & Membership
Michigan Health & Hospital Association

Vanita Pindolia, PharmD

Director, HFHS Pharmacy Care Management and Director of HFHS Managed Care Residency Program
Health Alliance Plan of Michigan

Robert Riney

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
Henry Ford Health System

Kate Sanford

Manager, Market & Product Development
Michigan Education Special Services Association

Michael Schultz

Consultant
MyEBenefits

Charles Shanley, MD

Chairman, Department of Surgery and Senior Vice President
Beaumont Hospitals – Royal Oak

Thomas Simmer, MD

Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer
BCBS of Michigan

Matt Walsh

Associate Vice President of Purchaser Initiatives
Health Alliance Plan of Michigan

Myron “Mike” Winkelman, R.Ph.

President
Winkelman Management Consulting

Cassandra Woods

State Director
Office of U.S. Senator Carl Levin

Laraine Yapo

Vice President of Health Care Services
Health Plus of Michigan

Gingrich to speak health policy in Lansing

By Chris Christoff

Detroit Free Press – Lansing Bureau

Monday, March 9, 2009

Stand by for Newt.

Conservative advocate Newt Gingrich will bring his ideas on health care reform to Lansing on Wednesday, when he speaks to the Senate Health Policy Committee at 9 a.m.

Gingrich was invited by committee chairman, Sen. Tom George, R-Kalamazoo, according to George's chief of staff, Sherry Sophia.

She said Gingrich, the former U.S. House Speaker, will give a presentation titled, "Creating a 21st Century Intelligent Health System in Michigan."

George is planning to unveil a comprehensive plan to make health insurance more affordable in Michigan, perhaps this spring, Sophia said.

Gingrich has been a leading figure in the national debate on health care reform. He founded the Georgia-based Center for Health Transformation, a think tank based in Georgia that advocates more efficient and effective medical care.

Gingrich: Health care reform should start with behavior

By Dawson Bell

Free Press Lansing Bureau

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Lansing – Improving the quality and access to health care in Michigan should start with efforts to reform behavior, like a ban on smoking in the workplace and mandatory exercise for school children, former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich told a state senate health policy panel this morning.

Gingrich, the former Republican congressman who now heads the Center for Health Transformation, said policymakers, the public and the media often make the mistake of viewing health care reform primarily as a financial challenge, rather than a complex mix of individual behavior, cultural influence and uneven quality. Expanding access to health care and improving citizens' health won't happen by changing the financial model, he said.

"If all you do is try to figure out how to finance the current system, you'll go broke," Gingrich said. "The current system is stunningly wasteful."

Gingrich appeared before the state Senate Health Policy Committee as part of a health-care related trip to Michigan.

Much of his testimony focused on the need to find ways to change behavior, especially in the state's poorest communities. Government can encourage healthier eating and living by providing financial and tax incentives, such as providing a food stamp bonus to recipients who purchase more fruits and vegetables, he said.

Gingrich Speaks to Michigan Senate Health Policy Committee

WKZOnews.com

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Lansing - Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich dropped by Lansing Wednesday to speak to the Senate Health Policy Committee on ideas for health care reform. State Senator Tom George chairs the committee and says Gingrich spoke mostly on the idea that providing incentives for healthier living plays just as much a roll in health care as treatment does.

"His focus really was very in sync with some of the things that we have been saying and learning about health in Michigan," says George. "That is the fact that we're not very healthy, but our health system can't rescue us if we don't improve our behaviors."

Gingrich agreed with the suggestion of paying pregnant teenage girls to take their prenatal vitamins, but one senator had a follow-up question.

"What do you think about just paying them to not get pregnant in the first place?" George says one Senator asked. "He kind of chuckled and said that might be worth looking at, too."

George says the examples Gingrich touched on might seem extreme for some, but they were examples meant to underscore the weight of the matter.

Potential Presidential Candidate Visits Michigan

WLNS.com

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

A potential presidential candidate told Michigan lawmakers the nation's health care system is sick and needs to be reformed.

Newt Gingrich, the former Georgia congressman and Speaker of the House, is considering a run in 2012. But for now, he's heading up a group he launched called the Center for Health Transformation. And health care is what prompted his trip to Lansing.

He told the Senate's Health Policy Committee that we need to change the way we do business and that the health care industry must be prepared for the 21st century.

"True reform must start with individuals making healthier choices," he said. "Additionally, our hospitals, clinics, physician practices, and health plans must be characterized by transparency in outcomes, rapid migration to best practices, and a paper-free workplace to reduce medical errors."

Gingrich Talks Health Care

By Stacia Mullaney

WLAJ.com

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Former U.S. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich was in Lansing Wednesday to talk health care.

A lot of ground was covered, the focus on ways to reduce state spending on health care while making Michigan healthier simultaneously.

According to Gingrich, Michigan can lower its health costs by paying young pregnant women from having babies with expensive health issues, "I'd say if you live in the poorest neighborhood and you become pregnant and you go to the doctor early and you go to the doctor every month, we'll give you an amount, and if you go for seven months, we'll give you a bonus."

The proposal, however, is getting mixed reviews in Lansing.

"I think it's a good idea," said area resident Thomas Klever. "If we can catch a medical problem with an infant as soon as possible, we'll be saving money in the long run."

"It would be better if that money went for prevention instead of making up for someone else's mistakes," said Louis Urrego.

But Gingrich said spending state dollars on prevention won't help, "I don't know of any particular evidence that in fact people get pregnant because of lack of knowledge of contraception or lack of access to contraception."

The former Speaker of the House offers up incentives to businesses as well, such as advocating tax breaks for grocery stores that open in poor neighborhoods to give those residents access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

"You can't ask people in the poorest neighborhoods to eat good food if there's not a single grocery store in their neighborhood," added Gingrich.

While incentives played a large role in the former Speaker's plans to fix Michigan's health care, he said more attention must be given to changing the way we approach our health as a culture in order to incite real change.

The former Speaker is heading up a group known as the Center for Health Transformation, which is what prompted his trip to Lansing Wednesday.

Gingrich: Pay pregnant teens to take vitamins

Associated Press – Appeared on [WTVM.com](#), [11Alive.com](#), [WXMI.com](#), [WTOL.com](#), [ConnectMidMichigan.com](#), [WNEM.com](#), [WJBF.com](#), [WOOD.com](#), [WRCBTV.com](#), [WISTV.com](#), [WTXL.com](#), [WALB.com](#) and [WILX.com](#).

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Lansing - Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich says Michigan should pay pregnant teenagers to take prenatal vitamins and stay healthy so the government avoids expensive costs when babies end up in neonatal intensive care units.

The Republican also told state senators Wednesday he supports paying poor children to read, and the state should consider paying girls to not get pregnant.

Gingrich is the founder of the Center for Health Transformation.

He says politicians and the media spend too much time focusing on the finances of health care. Gingrich says more attention must be paid to cultural changes such as requiring students to exercise, putting grocery stores in the inner city and incentivizing people to not smoke.

Gingrich: Health Care Needs to Focus On Individual Wellness Practices

MItechnews.com

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Lansing - The health care system of Michigan as well as the entire nation needs to be completely restructured to focus first on individual wellness practices, social structures that reinforce individual practices and the infrastructure of the health care system, former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich told the Senate Health Policy Committee. After doing that, then officials can look at the cost factors of health care, he said, and they may be surprised that savings can be realized.

Politicians and journalists only want to look at the cost of health care, Gingrich said, and then never look at anything else. But states that have tried employing new statewide systems for providing health care, especially for Medicaid populations, have found themselves spending more than they anticipated because those states did not oversee changes to their health care systems.

In making the changes to the health system, Gingrich said, states and the federal government may need to look at changing the budgeting system for health care to expand it beyond a one-year budget. One-year budgets are too limited in terms of looking at overall changes and results, he said.

The current health care system is "stunningly destructive", Gingrich said several times during his testimony, leading to thousands of needless deaths and treatment procedures that could be avoided if individuals were encouraged to take better care of their health and hospitals improved overall operations.

The need to make these changes is dictated in large measure because the world is undergoing the most massive economic downturn in 80 years, Gingrich said.

And to reporters Gingrich said, "For us to be the most prosperous nation, we must be the most productive nation. And to be the most productive our workers have to be healthy."

Director of the Center for Health Transformation, Gingrich said greater efforts have to be made to get individuals to be more proactive in their own health care, in an effort to avoid diseases and to manage chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma.

For example, Gingrich said he backs requirements that K-12 students have daily physical education to build a habit of exercise and minimize obesity. School lunch and breakfast programs should be looked at as well, he said.

Basics of how to reach individuals to manage their health conditions have to be re-thought, Gingrich said. In Georgia, for example, researchers found that poor, black men would not have their blood pressures taken by women in a clinic setting. So the researchers trained barbers to take blood pressures, he said.

States may also want to look at paying poor, pregnant teens to get pre-natal care and follow their physician recommendations, he said. Doing so could help cut down on the incidence of pre-term deliveries, requiring neonatal care and a greater likelihood of special education, all of which would be far more expensive than paying the young women to get care early on, he said.

Individual actions have to be backed, however, by cultural and societal changes, Gingrich said. For example, it is no good to tell poor families to eat a healthier diet if no grocery stores are nearby that sell fruits and vegetables, Gingrich said. He suggested that tax breaks should be offered to encourage grocery stores to open in lower-income areas.

Or governments should rethink food stamps, to provide more money in order for families to purchase fresh produce, he said.

The state last year enacted legislation to allow for food stamps to be issued twice a month, in order to help families buy fresh fruits and vegetables, but the newly enacted federal farm bill outlaws food stamps being issued more than once a month.

In terms of health care delivery, Gingrich said if the worst performing hospitals were brought up to the level of the best performing hospitals as many as 150,000 lives a year would be saved. Hospitals should be compelled to disclose such things as their infection rates, Gingrich said.

A major effort also has to be made to tackle fraud in Medicaid and Medicare, which could total as much as \$120 billion, Gingrich said. To do that will require using electronic health records, he said, adding, "You cannot catch crooks with paper records."

Gingrich said he also wanted to work with the administration of President Barack Obama to help write an inclusive, well-designed health care plan. If the focus on the part of the administration is "to write a narrowly-centered" plan that focuses on the federal role Mr. Gingrich said the Obama proposal would fail as did the proposal of former President Bill Clinton in 1993-94.

Gingrich visits new hospital in West Bloomfield

By Tanveer Ali

The Detroit News

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

West Bloomfield Township -- Former U.S. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich arrived to tour the Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital at 3 p.m. today -- a facility he heard about in a speech two years ago and wanted to visit after meeting with state lawmakers about the state of healthcare earlier this morning in Lansing.

The health center, set to officially open Sunday, is a new kind of concept that offers a community experience to healthcare, said President and CEO Gerard van Grinsven.

Van Grinsven said Gingrich called to arrange the visit after hearing him give a talk about the new center in a speech in Washington, D.C., two years ago.

"This is an evolution of what we are going to go through (with the health systems)," Gingrich said today, adding he hopes healthcare becomes more personal and will use his think tank -- the Center for Health Transformation -- to convey this idea.

"We will take this directly to other hospitals."

The Republican told state senators Wednesday he supports paying poor children to read and the state should consider paying girls to not get pregnant. And for the teenage girls who are pregnant, they should be paid to take prenatal vitamins and stay healthy so the government avoids expensive costs when babies end up in neonatal intensive care units.

He says politicians and the media spend too much time focusing on the finances of health care. Gingrich says more attention must be paid to cultural changes such as requiring students to exercise, putting grocery stores in the inner city and incentivizing people to not smoke.

He hopes to work in a bipartisan fashion to get healthcare reform done in Washington, D.C.

"We need to develop a health-based health reform," Gingrich said. "Free of the usual bureaucracy."

Gingrich Tours New West Bloomfield Hospital

WWJ Newsradio 950

Wednesday, March 11, 2009

West Bloomfield - The new state-of-the-art Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital has brought former U.S. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich to Michigan. He got his tour of the hospital Wednesday afternoon.

"We were here, I guess, a year ago and saw the original design work, and we were very intrigued by it... "This is an example of the evolution we're going to go through, ," Gingrich said.

"Health is going to be more personal -- it's about you. It's going to be earlier -- it's about staying healthy. It's going to be about having your family with you when you get sick. And it's going to be about applying the most modern technology in the most efficient possible to minimize cost, while nonetheless maximizing saving of lives," he said.

Gingrich, founder of the Center for Health Transformation, will promote the concept behind the newly-designed facilities to other U.S. hospitals.

Meanwhile President and CEO - Gerard Van Grinsven - says the hospital is about more than just patients' symptoms. It's also helping them improve their lifestyles, such as the food they eat. He says they've begun looking at the food they offer.

"We found farms which are doing sustainable agriculture. We have produce from there without any chemicals, full of nutritional value, full of antioxidants," Grinsven explained to WWJ Newsradio 950's Pat Sweeting.

"We're actually going as far as building a greenhouse here, so we can use it for therapy for our patients, family members, our employees; and so that we can have everyday school busses there, so we can start teaching our kids how to live a health life," he said.

The hospital officially opens on Sunday, March 15.



Photos courtesy of Henry Ford Health System

Gingrich: Focus on behavior to reform health care system

By David Eggert

Thursday, March 12, 2009

This Associated Press article appeared in the [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), [AP Michigan News](#), [Chicago Tribune](#), [WSBT South Bend](#), [Macon.com](#), [Battle Creek Enquirer](#), [TheCoastalSource.com](#), [The Oakland Press](#), and [Columbus Ledger-Enquirer](#).

Lansing — The first step in lowering health care costs and insuring all Americans is getting people to change their behavior, former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich told lawmakers here Wednesday.

The Republican — who represented Georgia's 6th District in the north Atlanta suburbs when he was in the House for two decades and guided the "Contract with America" effort in 1994 that helped the GOP sweep Congress — endorsed the carrot over the stick, saying he would pay pregnant teens to take prenatal vitamins and go to the doctor regularly so the government avoids astronomical bills when babies end up in neonatal intensive care units.

His other ideas include paying teens who don't get pregnant and stay in school; requiring exercise for schoolchildren; giving tax breaks to grocery stores that open in the inner city; giving bonuses to food stamp recipients who buy fruits and vegetables; and making students walk to school if they live close enough.

"You've got to start with the individual," Gingrich told the Senate Health Policy Committee. He said politicians and the media focus too much on the finances of health care. Policymakers instead should pay more attention to individual behaviors, cultural challenges and how care is delivered, he said.

"If all you do is focus on how to finance the current system, you will go broke," Gingrich said. "So you've got to start with how to fix the current system. The current system is stunningly wasteful. It has bad outcomes. It kills people unnecessarily."

He backed the use of electronic medical records to reduce the duplication of tests and cases of Medicaid and Medicare fraud. He said government should budget differently so long-term savings from spending money up front on prevention can be seen. He also criticized the difference in quality among doctors and hospitals.

"We just tolerate this extraordinary gap in productivity that we would never tolerate say in aviation," Gingrich said.

Health Policy Chairman Tom George invited Gingrich to speak to the committee after Gingrich called him last week. Gingrich founded the Center for Health Transformation and has spoken with officials in other states about health care reform.

George, a practicing physician and Republican from Kalamazoo County's Texas Township, said Gingrich's testimony reinforced and dovetailed with what legislators have been exploring. Bills are being introduced that would make students take physical education earlier than high school.

George has pushed legislation under which Medicaid patients would pay less for services if they exercise regularly and don't smoke. But on Wednesday he stopped short of supporting payments to people in exchange for healthy lifestyles. "The question is what incentives work and what behavior changes give you results?" he asked.

Granholm, Obama official join in health care forum today

By Tanveer Ali

The Detroit News

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Dearborn - One day after former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich visited Michigan to discuss the nation's health care system, another group of prominent politicians that includes a senior Obama official will take its turn at a health reform forum today.

Hundreds were invited to today's event at the Ford Conference and Event Center, which the Obama administration describes as a way to "bring together a diverse group of people to voice their concerns and ideas on reforming our health care system."

Front and center will be Gov. Jennifer Granholm, Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle and Melody Barnes, director of the White House Domestic Policy Council.

"This is an exciting opportunity to be a part of this national discussion on health care reform. It is no longer a moral imperative, it's a fiscal imperative," said Liz Boyd, a Granholm spokeswoman. "If we want to create jobs and rebuild our economy than we need to address the crushing cost of health care this year."

Gingrich came to the state Wednesday and met with lawmakers at the Capitol before touring Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital, which caught his interest for its community-based approach to health care. It is set to officially open Sunday.

He said he hopes to spread the ideas in that hospital, which focuses on treatment and comfort alike, to existing health systems across the country. He said he believes there is no barrier to that kind of care, saying it can be accessible to all people up and down the economic ladder.

"This is an evolution of what we are going to go through (with the health systems)," Gingrich said. "We will take this directly to other hospitals."

Gingrich, representing his think tank Center for Health Transformation, also spoke to state senators, saying Michigan should pay pregnant teenagers to take prenatal vitamins and stay healthy so the government avoids expensive costs of premature births.

He also said too much focus is put on the finances of health care and not enough on changes such as promoting exercise among students, putting grocery stores in the inner cities and providing incentives to people not to smoke.

The Republican also told state senators Wednesday he supports paying poor children to read, and the state should consider paying girls to not get pregnant.

A limited amount of tickets are available to the public for today's events. And demonstrators, including Bruce Fealk, a spokesman for the local Health Care-NOW advocacy group, hope to spread their message. Fealk said he'll speak on behalf of getting a single-payer health care program, either a universal version of Medicare or a private version, on the table.

"The single payer model hasn't been at the forefront," Fealk said. "I think they are going to hear through these forums is that a large number of people would like to have at least the option of a single payer program."

Gingrich: GOP Can Win MI In '10

By Tim Skubick

MIRS.com (subscription required)

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich has been flirting with a 2012 presidential run and at least a couple Michiganders today told him they were ready to hammer in yard signs.

When MIRS asked how important Michigan will be to the GOP in '12, Gingrich said, "I think Republicans should go all out in 2010, 2012."

He said the Republican Party had to be dedicated to "Detroit, Flint, Saginaw and the entire state of Michigan."

After testifying before a Senate Health Policy Committee meeting this morning, Gingrich expressed confidence that Michigan can become a red state. He appeared to take a swipe at Gov. Jennifer Granholm saying the state was "governed very badly," noting Michigan's high unemployment rate.

In his testimony, the former Georgia congressman said the state's economic woes started six years ago, which is when Granholm took office. Michigan's job losses and budget deficits did precede her, something spokeswoman Liz BOYD pointed out.

"These are just Republican talking points," she said. "In reality, Michigan has been the canary in the coalmine for the national economy . . . Look at the facts. The job loss started because of (former Gov.) John ENGLER and George W. BUSH."

Gingrich also told reporters that a Chapter 11 bankruptcy could benefit General Motors, noting that the airlines had come out fine. He said he wasn't calling to get rid of the United Auto Workers (UAW), but said the company and union had to adjust to worldwide competition. Noting his family includes Pennsylvania steelworkers, Gingrich said he's for "the right to organize," but unions have to modernize.

When asked about his tête-a-tête with conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh, Gingrich didn't seem to want to inflame the national GOP food fight. After two cycles of big losses, Republicans appear to many to be leaderless, aside from Limbaugh. Several Republicans who have criticized the radio host, like Republican National Committee Chair Michael Steele, have quickly apologized.

Gingrich has said that "it's irrational" for President Barack Obama to fail, something Limbaugh has said. That prompted Limbaugh to blast him as a "fly-by-night operator" who couldn't be trusted to stand for conservative principles.

Today, Gingrich told reporters, "I'm not shooting at anybody. Everybody should desire for the President to succeed. I didn't mention anybody by name."

Then he turned the blame on Democrats, saying the White House was "dragging us into areas that don't matter" with this "phony" issue. He said that their fixation on Limbaugh was "cynical, destructive and Nixonian."

"What a pathetic behavior by the White House to decide to pick a fight with Rush Limbaugh, at a time when the President should be bringing the country together and not splitting us apart," Gingrich said. "The entire country is not stupid enough not to notice that his entire thing was phony."

The Michigan Democratic Party (MDP) didn't pass up a chance to weigh in on the "ethically challenged" Gingrich, who resigned from Congress in 1999 after admitting to an affair. Gingrich had lead the impeachment of former President Bill Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

"Do Republicans really expect the people of Michigan to take advice on health care from such an ethically challenged character who wanted to kill Social Security?" asked MDP president Mark Brewer. "It is a sad commentary on the pathetic state of Michigan Republicans that they have to import a dubious figure like Gingrich for advice, but I understand that their national leader Rush Limbaugh was not available."

Asked to add her two cents to the story, Gov. Jennifer Granholm said, "I don't have a response to that. It's a whole

different controversy." Pressed, however, she rejected Gingrich's conclusion that the exchange has hurt the President, whom she contends is trying to forge bipartisan cooperation in the nation's capitol.

The speculation was evident that Gingrich had a hidden agenda connected to his Michigan visit. Sen. Gilda Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) confessed, "It did cross my mind" that the former speaker was also interested in running for president.

Asked, "How do you like the title President Gingrich?" he shrugged it off, saying it was "irrelevant." Then he was asked to "look me in the eye and say you do not want to be president." To that he said, "No . . ."

Pay teenagers not to get pregnant, Republican says

By John Byrne

The Raw Story

Thursday, March 12, 2009

The man who dubbed Vice President Joe Biden a socialist last September for arguing that paying taxes is "patriotic" appears to have some government redistribution ideas of his own.

Newt Gingrich, often cited as a Republican prospect for president in 2012, says the state should consider paying teenager girls not to get pregnant.

He also says that states should consider paying teenage girls who become pregnant to take prenatal vitamins to forestall paying additional health expenses for neonatal care down the road.

The remarks were made during a tour of Michigan on Wednesday. Gingrich is the founder of the Center for Health Transformation, a not-for-profit group advocating the partnership of private and public interests for health care reform.

Along with his remarks about pregnant teenagers, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives also said Wednesday that state legislators should consider paying poor children to read and individuals not to smoke.

"We need to develop a health-based health reform," Gingrich said, according to AP. "Free of the usual bureaucracy."

Another AP article adds, "The first step in lowering health care costs and insuring all Americans is getting people to change their behavior, former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich told state lawmakers Wednesday. The Republican endorsed the carrot over the stick, saying he would pay pregnant teens to take prenatal vitamins and go to the doctor regularly so the government avoids astronomical bills when babies end up in neonatal intensive care units."

"His other ideas include paying teens who don't get pregnant and stay in school; requiring exercise for school children; giving tax breaks to grocery stores that open in the inner city; giving bonuses to food stamp recipients who buy fruits and vegetables; and making students walk to school if they live close enough," the story continues.

"You've got to start with the individual," Gingrich told the Senate Health Policy Committee. "We have not thought through the fundamentals."

Gingrich: Health Incentives Key in MI

MIRS.com (subscription required)

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Giving financial incentives to workers who don't smoke or pregnant teens who show up for monthly prenatal checkups is a key way to reform health care in Michigan, former U.S. Speaker Newt Gingrich told a Senate panel today.

Too many states approach health care by tackling the costs first, he said. Kentucky, Tennessee and Massachusetts all implemented plans from this angle and failed. Michigan, too, is a high-cost, low-quality state, according to the Gingrich's Washington, D.C.-based Center for Health Transformation.

A better idea is addressing the causes of strain on a state's health care system. That includes not using the health care money a state receives in a "disorganized way" that has varying layers of government and health care providers have a hand in it.

"If all you do is try to figure out how to finance the current system, you'll go broke," Gingrich said. "So you've got to start with how to fix the current system. The current system is stunningly wasteful."

Senate Health Policy Chair Tom George (R-Texas Twp.) asked the founder of the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Health Transformation to testify before the panel about reducing costs, increasing technology and increasing coverage through an individual-based health care approach.

George concurred with Gingrich on the efficiency point: "We spend millions on health care, even though Michiganders are not particularly healthy."

Gingrich suggested that the key to increasing accessibility and lowering costs lies in:

- Individuals have to be more interested in their own health care.
- The community and culture have to change. He suggested mandatory everyday gym class for kids and tax breaks for grocery stores in poor neighborhoods.
- The delivery system has to improve, like requiring hospitals to report their infection rate. More reliance on electronic medical records can improve care and cut down on Medicare fraud.

Gingrich said that taking care of those elements can reduce costs by 20 to 40 percent and get the United States to 100 percent universal coverage.

Not surprisingly, the Republican didn't endorse President Barack Obama's health care plan or Medicare, which some Democrats tout as a model for effective universal care. Gingrich said that he told former First Lady Hillary Clinton not to push a big plan all at once and she didn't listen. If Obama goes for a federal system based on "values only 30 percent of the country agree with," Gingrich predicted he'd fail, too.

Sen. Gilda Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) agreed with Gingrich that teen pregnancy is a big problem that contributes to health and welfare costs. But when she suggested giving teen girls access to cheaper birth control, he shot the idea down. Gingrich said that wasn't the reason for the epidemic. Instead, he blamed the problem on the "total destruction of the American family" since 1960.

Gingrich met with George and the other Republicans on the panel before the meeting and was greeted with open arms. Sen. Alan Sanborn (R-Richmond) said he agreed with Gingrich's testimony "wholeheartedly" and took the opportunity to compliment Sen. Bruce Patterson (R-Canton) for losing 50 pounds.

"He's even more productive at work now that he's not so frightening to be around," Sanborn cracked, adding that his colleague was more "warm and fuzzy."

Patterson told Gingrich he has a reputation as the "grand inquisitor," but he only commended him as being "brilliant, provocative and motivational." Gingrich replied that he was "stunned and delighted."

George has been chairing a Making Health Care Affordable and Accessible work group. He said he's hoping to build a plan for Michigan based on the Center's research. He will be introducing legislation to mandate physical education five days a week.

Newt's new drug for America

By Ellen Ratner

TalkRadioNews.com

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This week, the president is having his first health care summit. He has proposed changes in the budget for what he calls a down payment for future health care. He signed a bill to provide more children with access to health services, and on Saturday evening he offered the job of secretary of Health and Human Services to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, D-Kan.

Health care is the big elephant in the living room, and no one has successfully taken it on. The Democrats put a kind of universal health care in their platform in 1948, which was 61 years ago. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton tried to tackle health care as first lady with the slogan "health care that is always there." She was out-manuevered, and the plan was squashed with the help of some very clever Harry and Louise ads. This president has learned from the mistakes of others and is going to take it at a slower pace.

However, the other side of the aisle decided to preempt the president last week by having their own conference with their own solutions. No, it was not the Conservative Political Action Conference, or CPAC, where Newt Gingrich was a star. Instead, Republicans held a "Healthcare that Works" conference, and Gingrich was there, again, in a starring role. He can always reinvent himself. He became speaker because he was able to speak to the average voter. His Contract for America resonated with millions of Americans. It was simple and clear. Many of his health care ideas are the same. They are clear, simple and something with which most Americans can relate.

Gingrich began the Center for Health Transformation in 2003 by branding it "Better health, lower cost." As a liberal, I am suspect of the Republican motives with regard to health care and the free market. I spent years working for a "for profit" health care company where there were corporate meetings devoted to making sure our managers were increasing the amount of tests given to patients to boost the bottom line. So, I come to the Gingrich plans with a jaundiced eye.

Jaundiced eye or not, some of Gingrich's ideas are sound and should be taken into consideration by the Obama team. His 10-point plan has some good ideas even if it is a bit biased toward limiting liability, which is the hallmark of Republican thought.

The Gingrich plan seeks to reward health care groups that adopt evidenced-based practices with higher reimbursements. He wants to develop new ways of paying for health care that emphasizes patient wellness. Transparency is another goal, which would include price and quality information from all government health programs including Medicare, Medicaid and Veterans Affairs. He wants to increase the ability to self-report medical errors in exchange for limited liability. The FAA adopted these self-reporting practices years ago, and it has worked to make our skies much safer, as the data is then collated and airlines can train pilots to avoid the mistakes others have made. In addition, he wants to give health care plans, both public and private, the latitude to experiment with prevention and wellness programs by redesigning health insurance that encourages wellness.

Liberal, conservative or anything in between, it is worth remembering that it was Newt Gingrich who ushered us into the 21st century by developing Thomas.gov. We can now search bills, read them as they are being considered and follow their progress through the maze of committees. Never behind the times when it comes to technology, he has a 10-point system to create an electronic health information platform, which would include open-source technology so hospitals and other providers do not have to spend valuable dollars and time reinventing the wheel. The president's broadband initiative could tie in to make this information system work and save millions of dollars.

I have been around Washington, D.C., long enough to be skeptical of most statistics and facts I read. But if Gingrich's Center for Health Transformation's information is correct, it is enough to make Florence Nightingale turn over in her grave. One eye-popping fact is that in 2007, Florida accounted for "80 percent of drugs billed across the United States for Medicare beneficiaries with HIV/AIDS even though the region only had about one of 10 eligible patients."

There are cases of sham companies and putting homeless people on vans and ambulances so they would use hospital services they did not need. I would have never believed that this was really happening had I not sat through countless meetings designed to drive up health care costs for profit in the mid-1980s. One solid idea out of the Gingrich shop is to fully fund the Department of Health and Human Services inspector general. Imagine that! Real government oversight.

Do I really trust the Republicans on oversight? Not a chance. Their record is not stellar. However, other than perhaps running for president in 2012, the former speaker has nothing to gain from this. He has as much consulting, speaking and financial support as he could possibly want. He has some great ideas, and the Obama administration should invite him to be an integral part of its reform effort.

Gingrich shows political touch

By Susan J. Demas
The Detroit News
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In Mich. visit, GOP leader displays switch from firebrand to statesman

Newt Gingrich doesn't just pop into town to chat about health care. And as an aide tells me, he really doesn't testify before legislative committees.

But that's what the former U.S. House speaker did Wednesday when he dazzled the Senate Health Policy Committee in Lansing with a charmingly vague vision for solving Michigan's health care crisis.

As he strolled into the Boji Tower hearing room, the audience tittered. After he gave his testimony people broke into applause -- even flattering liberal lioness Sen. Gilda Jacobs, D-Huntington Woods. On their way out, a couple begged him to run for president.

That's the reaction Gingrich had to be looking for. He's been flirting with a 2012 run, much as he did last cycle. And he clearly thinks the Mitten State is important to Republicans, telling me that the GOP should "go all out in 2010, 2012."

The Georgian is no slouch and will certainly wait to see how his competition fares. If Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney flame out, Gingrich may well decide to jump in. He'll also be keeping a close eye on Barack Obama's numbers.

What he does want to be is the savior of the Republican Party. He's even tangled with its emperor, Rush Limbaugh, arguing that "it's irrational" to hope the president fails. Gingrich wasn't too brave, telling the Capitol press corps that he "didn't mention anybody by name," lest he be permanently exiled by La Limbaugh.

The bespectacled, disarmingly soft-spoken Gingrich casts an appealing figure as the voice of reasoned conservatism. Limbaugh and his radio clones thunder that the party must jolt farther right. Talking heads like former Michigan GOP leader Saul Anuzis mistake their Ronald Reagan fetish as a game plan. And Republican National Committee Chair Michael Steele babbles about rebranding stale Republican concepts with an "off the hook" marketing campaign.

True dat. Taxes be wack, son.

Meanwhile, Gingrich is churning out original ideas. (OK, the slogan at Newt.org, "Real change requires real change" needs work). There's the Center for Health Transformation that brought him here this week. And he has the Save American Jobs Project fighting against the pro-labor card check legislation (and employing Anuzis, since there aren't any jobs for Republicans in Michigan).

Gingrich is smart enough to know that the GOP can't be the Party of No and needs to have solutions for health care, jobs and education, rather than letting Democrats define the debate. You can argue that ideas like paying teenage girls not to get pregnant and investing more in medical technology do not a health plan make, but that's not the point. Gingrich is never going to support big federal programs. What he's banking on is that Congress won't have the cojones for that sort of thing, either.

Gingrich certainly is one of the Republicans' top political minds. He cheerfully dropped the hammer on Gov. Jennifer Granholm, declaring the state was "governed very badly" and conveniently dating all of Michigan's woes to the year she took office (he was off by about two).

But it's his fisting of Obama that's truly a thing of beauty. First, Gingrich linked the change-coated president with George W. Bush, coining the phrase "Bush-Obama big spending continuity." Fifty-three days on the job and the O-Man's a failure.

Then in Lansing, the speaker brushed off Limbaugh's slam of him as a "fly-by-night operator" by cleverly turning around a reporter's question to blame the White House. Gingrich gleefully called Team Obama "cynical, destructive and Nixonian" for instigating the "phony" Rush firestorm.

The adoring crowds swarmed in Michigan, as they do across the country. The Newt Gingrich rehabilitation project has gone so well that the image of him as the frumpy, plump leader of the Republican Revolution zealously torturing Bill Clinton has faded. No one really remembers he was once heaved out of office by Tom DeLay & Co. after bungling the 1995 government shutdown and the 1998 midterms.

Even Gingrich's coup de grace -- hypocritically having an affair while leading Clinton's congressional crucifixion for messing around with Monica Lewinsky -- gets only passing mention on Gingrich's Wikipedia page.

That was a decade ago. The new Newt is trimmer with an almost Zen-like calm. Even when he blames teen pregnancy on the "total destruction of the American family" since 1960, he resists the urge to bloviate against godless, hippie liberals as he would have in the '90s. Now he lets us read between the lines.

They say there are no second acts in politics anymore. But Gingrich has managed to transform himself from feckless firebrand to statesman in a few years. Not bad.