

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION – WEDNESDAY, JULY 14, 2004

SENATORS ARRIVE: At 1:04 pm, Speaker Finneran asked members to stand and clear the aisles for the arrival of the honorable Senate for the Constitutional Convention.

CONVENTION RECONVENED: Senate President Travaglini called the convention to order at 1:08 pm, asking members to clear the aisles to get the business of the day underway.

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE AMENDMENT: Question came on agreeing to the amendment establishing universal health care.

MOORE AMENDMENT: Sen. Moore offered an amendment calling for a subsequent vote on the plan. Sen. Moore said as the joint chair of Health Care, I have mixed feelings with regard to making any changes to this amendment because I have been very active over the last few years in finding ways to expand access to care for our constituents. We have made great progress, and we have expanded children's insurance and fully funded Prescription Advantage.

The amendment before us offers a lot of promise and could potentially offer a great cost. It will create a very significant demand on the resources of the commonwealth when and if it becomes part of our constitution. It leaves many words up to interpretation, such as "comprehensive." The bottom line is there's no free lunch. It is critical that we give them a second opportunity to vote once the Legislature has come up with a plan.

There is already action in the Legislature to come up with a plan for coming up with a cost estimate for universal health care. This would give the people an opportunity to vote again. Before that becomes fully effective, they can vote on the plan so they know what they're getting, they know how we're going to pay for it and we know they would agree to what we have put forth. I hope the amendment that would call for a subsequent vote once we know what the plan is, is adopted.

Sen. Tucker said I first want to thank the people who brought us to this table today. I rise in support of this amendment. It is not to derail this matter, but yet to approve it. I am a so-called border senator. Most of my constituents can walk to New Hampshire. I am very sensitive to many issues that affect differences between states. We're now just recovering from when the sales tax was enacted in the 1960s. I think we're also more skeptical than others of the ability of this state unilaterally, to solve a problem like universal access to health care. We know it's a federal problem. I'm going to support this because I want the issue to proceed. I want the issue to come to the table. Some of the most tragic stories

we hear are about people who are uninsured or underinsured. This amendment respects the intelligence of our voters. It will give them a cost estimate before it happens in our state. It does not make the issue go away. It will force the process even more. People will come to the table with an actual plan and put pressure on people to address what we already know is a serious issue.

By voice vote, amendment ADOPTED

Sen. Barrios and Rep. Travis rose to be recognized. Sen. Tolman was afforded the forum. Sen. Travaglini asked the members to allow Sen. Tolman to speak.

Sen. Tolman said I must commend the amendment. We're bringing this before the voters twice. This is not something I'm crazy about, but I'm not afraid of it. Last week, many of us came here to express our views. We're trying to provide justice in health care so that everyone has access to health care.

Sen. Tolman continued: As we look forward today, we should genuinely accept the fact that every single person here should have health care. When we look at the bill we have in the Legislature right now, the House and Senate have actually agreed to language that will answer many of the questions to figure out if we can afford universal health care. We know where we stand on this. Sen. Tolman moved the question and his motion prevailed by voice vote.

Sen. Travaglini said the senator has moved for the question to be voted on. That immediately calls for a roll call. The chair would remind the members that it will take at least 51 members voting in the affirmative to move the question forward.

BY ROLL CALL VOTE 153 – 41 AMENDMENT ADOPTED

At 1:34 pm, Sen. Berry moved that the convention adjourn. There was no objection.

ADJOURNS: The convention adjourned at 1:34 pm.