

# OPINION

STATE-TIMES/MORNING ADVOCATE

## READERS' VIEWS

# Continue health-care reform

For a variety of reasons, the momentum for health-care reform is reaching the proverbial tipping point in Louisiana. But the difficult question remains — can we get it done? Blueprint Louisiana firmly believes the time has come. We have to do it, and Blueprint commends the Jindal administration for tackling health-care reform now.

Louisiana is long overdue in addressing its health-care challenges. It's been a topic of conversation and study for decades, yet we have no positive results to report. For many in our state, access to health-care services is very onerous, and the health outcomes for our citizens remain among the worst in the nation. This is simply unacceptable.

Blueprint has always believed Louisiana should pursue health-care reform in a comprehensive way to fundamentally change for the better Louisiana's otherwise dismal health-care future.

The focus must be on the patient — how can we improve access to care for the uninsured, approximately 20 percent of the state's population. With better access, we believe better health outcomes will follow. Blueprint's health-care proposals represent a middle ground approach that would improve our care for the uninsured in three important ways:

- Expanding Louisiana's health-care safety net provider system to offer the uninsured better access to care that is delivered closer to home by a mix of public and willing community health-care providers;

- Customizing the safety net provider system by region to best meet the primary-care and

hospital-care needs of patients in each region — eliminating any under-utilized charity hospitals; and

- Leveraging (by 3 to 1) available federal dollars to progressively extend insurance coverage to low-income parents (i.e., LaCHIP for parents).

We also believe our health-care proposals would strengthen LSU's ability to deliver enhanced medical education programs. We agree a new teaching hospital should be rebuilt in New Orleans to serve as an anchor facility for the LSU medical school. However, the size and the mission of that teaching hospital should be consistent with the implementation of a provider safety net system that has been expanded to include willing private and community hospitals.

We recognize there are many detailed design and process questions about the proposals being discussed, and those questions need to be worked out. The success of health-care reform in Louisiana rests with the ability of key stakeholders (Jindal administration, Legislature, LSU and the community of health-care provider organizations) to work together on these details to accomplish the goals we all seek.

It's a tremendous challenge, but we believe we're up to the task. Blueprint commits to work collaboratively with those key stakeholder groups to achieve this desperately-needed reform.

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