

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

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### **Massachusetts Medicine**

The Massachusetts Medical Society contacted me in my State House office a few weeks ago and invited me to be their legislator of the month for the September edition of their newsletter. Honored by their selection, I accepted the offer with thanks and started working on a statement for the state's doctors.

Medical care, specifically health insurance to provide that care, is on the front burner in these last months of 2007. All Massachusetts residents will be required to show proof of health insurance on filing their tax returns next year. The procedures for gaining access to coverage are just coming together and, like any new process, they are developing with a certain amount of trial and error.

Please call my office if you are having difficulty working through the state's Connector to get your insurance. I have already been able to ease the path to insurance for several individuals, and each successful intervention makes the next task easier to handle.

Massachusetts passed an ambitious law that aims to provide affordable insurance, and I am doing what I can to help you make it a success.

This is what I wrote for *Vital Signs*, the medical society publication:

“ ‘High quality, affordable, universally accessible.’ Those three ingredients define the health care goal of society. A friend gave me this summary some time ago, and it has stayed with me as the legislature works to improve the health care system in Massachusetts.

“Two out of three ingredients are always within reach, but the capturing all three presents a serious, historically unmet challenge. Last year's health insurance system overhaul is our state's latest attempt to reach the goal. Can we do it?

“We have these things going for us. We began with a high number of insured residents and are building on that number each month. The Connector is working through growing pains to link individuals with their plans. And the threat of a tax penalty should bring more people into compliance in 2008.

“We will have to guard against the legislative tendency to add new benefits, since each new mandate increases costs. We must confront the challenges of recruiting and retaining qualified professionals, a particular concern in my part of the state. Losing talented physicians to other states threatens both the quality and accessibility of medical services.

“Can we do it? Yes, we can.”