



## Op Ed Piece

### Real Solutions for a Healthy Wisconsin

By Nathan Russell

As I've gone from door to door and town to town over the last few months on the campaign trail, the issues I've been asked about most are the economy and health care. These are vitally important issues, and the differences between my opponents approach and my own could not be more clear.

In the last year, Wisconsin has lost over 12,000 jobs. The jobs went to other states or countries or simply disappeared because businesses folded. We cannot allow this to continue.

There are going to be a lot of hard choices to be made in the next state budget. Those choices must all be driven by two guiding principles; we must stop the bleeding and keep the jobs we have, and do everything we can to help bring new businesses and family supporting jobs into our state.

Anyone who watched the last budget come to a halt for months on end knows that health care reform will be a huge component of the debate. My opponent's record tells you what his choice would be.

According to the Doyle Administration, the government-run health care plan Representative Hilgenberg sponsored would increase the tax burden for Wisconsin residents by \$17 billion dollars. Putting that into perspective, the total amount the state took in from its residents in taxes in 2005 was \$12 billion dollars. To be clear, Representative Hilgenberg's plan to make health care more "affordable," is to increase your state taxes by nearly 140%. That's not what I'd call affordable, and worse yet it's only a start.

The Doyle Administration's analysis of Representative Hilgenberg's bill pointed out, "The availability of affordable comprehensive health coverage could encourage migration to Wisconsin to obtain coverage." While this poses the influx of people seeking unlimited free health care as a possibility, we all know from past experience that it is a guarantee, and that it will continually increase the cost of a program we cannot afford in the first place.

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I offer you a different, realistic and attainable vision for health care and our fragile economy. Early on in this campaign, I launched *YourCARE*, which is made up of multiple proposals all aimed to provide families with maximum control of their health care dollars, decisions and information.

The plan saves individuals and families money by making all medical expenses tax deductible and allows businesses to pool together to create the purchasing power of larger companies. The plan increases choices of state residents by requiring full disclosure of health care costs including deductibles and co-insurance. It also unlocks Wisconsin's entrepreneurial spirit by providing CareGrants, which provide assistance to new and expanding business to obtain private health care coverage for their employees as they begin a new business venture.

The centerpiece of *YourCARE* is its focus on preventative care and workplace wellness. Citizens who enroll and actively follow a preventative care program will receive a \$150 tax credit on their state income taxes. An increased focus on preventative care will reap cost savings benefits and will set our state up for further savings and healthy citizens for generations to come.

Ultimately, no matter what system we create the people who will pay for our health care is us. With that in mind, it is critical that the legislature look to solutions that work to lower the cost of health care delivery. Taking money out of working families pockets is not only unwise, it will further hurt our families and our local economy.

To view more details on my plan, please visit [www.russellforassembly.com](http://www.russellforassembly.com).

Nathan Russell is a candidate for the 51st Assembly District and resides in Sauk City with his wife and three daughters. The 51st Assembly District includes nearly all of Iowa and Lafayette Counties, the southern portion of Sauk County, and three municipalities in Richland County.

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