



NORTHEAST
WISCONSIN
CHAMBERS
COALITION

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Fox Cities Chamber
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N.E.W. CHAMBERS COALITION POSITION STATEMENT

The Chambers of Commerce representing the communities of Fond du Lac, the Fox Cities, Green Bay and Oshkosh are united in their commitment to the following positions. Collectively these organizations represent over 6500 businesses within the Northeast Wisconsin area. These companies currently employ over 250,000 Wisconsin taxpayers.

1. Improved Access to Affordable Health Insurance for Small Business

- Small businesses are increasingly challenged to provide high quality health insurance benefits to their employees. For the most part, smaller firms lack access to purchasing pools that would permit them to gain adequate clout to negotiate favorable agreements with insurers & providers. Amending Wisconsin statutes to permit the creation of association based purchasing pools through vehicles like a MEWA (Multiple Employer Welfare Association) and self insure like many large companies do would be an important step in improving access to affordable benefits.

2. Greater Equalization Between Private & Public Sector Health Benefits

- Public employees in Wisconsin (teachers, municipal & county employees, state workers) frequently receive benefits far broader than those provided to their private sector counterparts. Just as important, while private sector workers increasingly pay a substantial part of their insurance premiums, as well as share higher costs through co-insurance & deductibles, most public sector workers pay little for their benefits. The gap between the cost born by private sector employers vs. public sector employers is growing annually. The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance forecasts the cost to insure a school teacher, for example, will grow from \$9,700 in 02-03 to \$20,300 in 06-07. This is unfair to taxpayers. It is also problematic from a financial viewpoint, in that will have an extraordinarily negative impact upon governmental units at every level. Government employees in Wisconsin need to receive benefits more in line with those provided by the private sector.

3. Support "Fair Share" Funding for Medicare & Medicaid in Wisconsin

- Federal Medicare payments covered only 89 percent of hospital costs incurred by those that it covers, while Medicaid covered only 78 percent of its costs in Wisconsin. Reimbursement levels in Wisconsin lag Illinois by 15 to 17 percent. When providers receive inadequate reimbursement for their services by Medicare & Medicaid the result is "cost shifting," whereby, providers increase their prices to people with private third party insurance to cover what they lose on government programs. We demand "Fair Share" treatment by the federal government and challenge the Wisconsin legislative delegation to bring about greater equity.