

208 Commission Hearing – October 10th, 2007

The Blue Ribbon Commission for Health Care Reform (also called the 208 Commission from the number of the bill that created it) met with our community and others around the state recently. The purpose of the hearings was to take input on the 5 plans currently under consideration by the Commission for presentation to the legislature next January. Four of the plans were chosen from the 31 originally presented to the Commission, and represent four different approaches to health care reform for Colorado. One of these plans subsidizes health insurance for needy people, two mandate insurance coverage for everyone, and the fourth is a “single-payer” system. The fifth is a composite developed by Commission members, combining ideas from other plans. (This is a *very* brief summary – for more details go to www.colorado.gov/208commission) The first four plans were evaluated by the Lewin Group for associated costs. Colorado’s health care budget is currently \$30 billion. The first three plans would increase this to between \$30.4 and \$31.3 billion. The “single-payer” plan would save over \$1.4 billion. The fifth plan is still to some degree a “work in progress”, so has not been evaluated for costs.

At the hearing, Commissioner Clarke Becker gave a powerpoint presentation explaining the above, and then he and the other four commissioners (Steven Summer, Lynn Westberg, Steve ErkenBrack and Mark Simon) took questions and comments from the audience. The LWVCO had prepared a statement, based on the League position, to be presented at these hearings. Jodi Foran, president of the Montezuma County League, and myself delivered it at the meeting. **The text of this statement, for those who are interested, is on page xx.** Between 20 and 30 people spoke to the meeting; at least 15 of those (including the League) were in favor of the “single payer” model. Lynn Westberg told me later that at the hearing in Grand Junction the following evening, there was also a lot of support for “single payer”. State Rep., Ellen Roberts, attended the hearing, as did representatives of both John and Ken Salazar, county commissioner Joelle Riddle and city councilor Renee Parsons. Other communities – Cortez, Naturita and others – were represented by attendees.

The five commissioners (six, if you count Mark Simon’s beautiful Great Pyrenees helper dog) are to be commended for their relaxed manner of conducting the meeting and for their attention to all that was said. They took lots of notes – we hope they make good use of them!