

# The Providence Journal

## **Letter to the Editor - Linda Katz Shrinking R.I. coverage calls for reform**

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The health-insurance data recently released by the Census Bureau highlights the need for comprehensive national health-care reform. Just over 11 percent of Rhode Islanders, some 123,000 residents, lacked health coverage in 2007-08 compared with 7 percent at the beginning of the decade. Erosion of employer-sponsored health insurance is the primary cause of the lost ground in coverage, with the percentage of Rhode Islanders with employer-provided coverage dropping to 67 percent, from 74 percent in 2000-01.

With skyrocketing health-care costs, both employers and employees are having greater difficulty affording health insurance. More and more Rhode Islanders are losing access to health coverage as they lose their jobs, and we can expect that the number of uninsured will be much higher in 2009, reflecting the rise in unemployment from 7.7 percent in July 2008 to 12.7 percent this past July.

Rhode Island's congressional delegation is on the right path in working to ensure that Congress enacts comprehensive reform that expands access to affordable, adequate health care, slows the growth in health-care costs, and is paid for in a fair, responsible way. In the meantime, state lawmakers should prevent any further erosion in health-care coverage by holding the line on Medicaid/Rite Care coverage for lower-income families, people with disabilities and seniors.

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