



NC Health Report

The Newsletter of the NC Health Access Coalition  NC JUSTICE CENTER

August 12, 2008

HAC Meeting, Commentaries, a New Video, and a Tight Budget in 2009

Adam Searing is on vacation so I'll be producing the NC Health Report for the next couple of weeks. My apologies in advance for any reductions in quality.

HEALTH NEWS AND COMMENTARY AT THE PROGRESSIVE PULSE

[Consumer-driven health care divas](#): Steve Turner on the three-tiered health care system.

WakeMed gets a [red light](#) from state regulators, while Rex gets a [green light](#).

The Adams discuss health care benefits for elected officials in a new [video](#). It turns out that the perks for local officials once they leave office may not be [allowed](#) by state law.

Happy Blue [Cross](#) Day!

HEALTH ACCESS COALITION MEETING:

On Monday, September 22nd from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, the Health Access Coalition will hold a meeting at the [AARP North Carolina office, 1511 Sunday Drive, Suite 312, Raleigh](#)

. Notice the new location for our meeting and the new location for AARP.

We will be taking care of administrative business, discussing next steps for our health coverage expansion proposal and developing strategy. RSVP to Nicole Dozier (nicole@ncjustice.org) if you would like to come.

ABOUT US

Adam blogs on state politics and healthcare at [The Progressive Pulse](#).

Video commentaries on NC policy and politics: [HAC on YouTube](#).

See the latest [NC Health Report newsletter](#) as well as older issues.

The nonprofit Health Access Coalition needs your help to continue providing this update. PLEASE [CONTRIBUTE](#).

Please visit our [website](#).

EDITOR:
[Adam Searing](#),
Director
**NC Justice
Center's
HEALTH
ACCESS
COALITION**

Tight Budget in 2009

By Adam Linker

Our colleagues at the Budget & Tax Center are telling us that state budget writers will need to find \$1 billion in 2009 to cover new tax reductions, non-voter approved debt, and a variety of recurring items paid for with non-recurring revenues before even considering pay raises for teachers and state employees.

To fill that hole, tax revenues would need to increase by 4.75 percent, the BTC analysts say, which exceeds the current rate of growth.

This is a good reminder that the state needs comprehensive tax reform to pay for progressive priorities, including the expansion of health care coverage. We can't fully fund Medicaid or NC Kids Care or help small businesses extend insurance benefits to workers when the state is strapped for cash.

It is also a good time to start talking about the benefits of state spending on programs like Medicaid. During an economic downturn is not the time to cut reimbursement rates or limit eligibility. As the unemployment rate creeps higher, the number of uninsured in North Carolina increases.

Medicaid is not only important as a safety net; it also operates as an important economic stimulus. A relatively small amount of state Medicaid spending can attract a sizable chunk of federal funds. And health care is a critical sector of the state economy. During the current downturn it is one of the few industries still hiring. Jobs in health care and social assistance grew by 35.7 percent from 2000 to 2007 compared to 6 percent total job growth in the state over that time.

The state may have to tighten its belt in 2009 because of larger problems in the economy, but we should start advocating for tax reforms to pay for progressive programs. And it's never too soon to remind lawmakers that access to health care is most important during an economic slowdown.

Adam Linker is a health policy analyst with the N.C. Justice Center's Health Access Coalition