

## SCHWARZENEGGER VETO CALLED A WARNING FOR MASSACHUSETTS

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STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, SEPT. 7, 2006....California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's intention to veto a universal health care bill was cited as a red flag in Massachusetts Thursday by the campaign pushing to make health insurance a constitutional right.

In an email to members of the Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign, co-chairwoman Barbara Roop said the California Assembly twice in three years, first with an employer mandate and now with a single-payer proposal, has responded to constituent demands while rousing opposition from business leaders.

"How often will the Assembly take the political heat to enact needed reforms when faced with such opposition?" Roop wrote. "Whatever 'flavor' of reform you prefer, we can only afford it if we cut costs as we expand coverage. But if cutting costs brings out the big stakeholders with all guns blazing, enacting statutes clearly isn't enough. A constitutional mandate is essential for bullet-proof reforms."

The Massachusetts Legislature this spring sent the campaign's citizen-sponsored constitutional amendment to a study committee, crushing the hopes of sponsors who planned to put the amendment before voters statewide this November. Legislators argued the state's new health care access law (Chapter 58) must be given time to live up to its promise of delivering insurance to everyone who lacks it in Massachusetts.

But Roop fears the statutory reforms may not survive special interest lobbying and pressure to enact changes to the law. "They say little about containing costs," she wrote. "Many fear they're underfunded. When these subjects come up in earnest, as they must, look out. Without the Health Care Amendment, the 2006 reforms may not survive. Will the Massachusetts Legislature jump to replace them?"

In an interview Thursday, Roop said: "My own sense is that there are going to be a variety of sort of unintended consequences from Chapter 58 that will need fixing, which will either require additional funding or other initiatives to make the reforms more affordable over time. Once we get to that point, the reforms may well be at risk. I can see that happening in the next year or two."

Extensive bills making changes throughout the Massachusetts law are already

advancing in the Legislature.

The campaign's constitutional amendment received initial approval during the 2003-2004 session, but most observers on Beacon Hill do not expect it to emerge from the study committee when the Constitutional Convention resumes here on Nov. 9.

In a "Team Arnold" press release posted on Schwarzenegger's campaign web site and published in the San Diego Union-Tribune, Schwarzenegger said he "must veto" the legislation "because I cannot support a government-run health care system."

"Socialized medicine is not the solution to our state's health care problems," Schwarzenegger wrote. "This bill would require extraordinary redirection of public and private funding by creating a vast new bureaucracy to take over health insurance and medical care for Californians – a serious and expensive mistake." The program would cost the state billions of dollars and lead to new taxes, he added.

Schwarzenegger said he would work with lawmakers on a comprehensive bill next year.

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