

# Health care reform: Level the playing field

10/03/2009

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A few years ago a divorce left me without health insurance for the first time in my adult life. Like a lot of people, I had "pre-existing medical conditions" and was unable to find anything close to affordable health insurance coverage on the open market.

After surviving three harrowing years, two covered under the Missouri Pool insurance with a \$5,000 deductible and one with no insurance because the Missouri Pool insurance became unaffordable, I finally turned 65 and was eligible for Medicare.

I am one of the lucky ones. Since being covered by Medicare, I have been hospitalized twice for illnesses related to pre-existing medical conditions. Had this happened six months earlier, I could very well be one of the thousands of Missourians facing bankruptcy because of medical expenses.

I support comprehensive federal health care reform because I have experienced the problems inherent in our current system. Eliminating the ability of insurance companies to deny coverage because of "pre-existing conditions" and making insurance affordable for everyone will make a world of difference for many Missourians.

It is critical that our elected officials support federal health care reform and specifically a public option. I believe the public option is the only way to level the playing field between patients, medical caregivers and insurance companies.

**Valerie Rovira — Chesterfield**