

## House Republican Press Release

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### DelGobbo Named to Statewide Hospital Task Force



*Will help develop strategies for stable financial future of Connecticut hospitals*

Governor M. Jodi Rell has named state Rep. Kevin M. DelGobbo, R-70th, Naugatuck, to a new statewide task force to develop strategies to stabilize and chart the future course of hospitals in Connecticut, many of which are

facing financial hardship.

“The governor is right on track in forming a group like this,” Rep. DelGobbo said. “Our hospital system is absolutely critical to the children, families and seniors of Connecticut. We cannot overstate how important our hospital system is to the people of the state.”

Rep. DelGobbo added, “I know first hand about the financial challenges facing Waterbury Hospital and St. Mary’s Hospital, as they continue to provide world class health service to the people of our area.”

“I am happy to be part of the group that will be working to assure we continue to have the best hospital care in the world,” said Rep. DelGobbo.

The Hospital Task Force will hold its first meeting August 8. It will be co-chaired by Robert Genuario, Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, and Cristine Vogel, Commissioner of the Office of Health Care Access. Panel members include state agency commissioners, legislators, industry representatives and labor leaders.

“All of us count on having a hospital available – close by, there when we need it and prepared for almost any kind of medical emergency, day or night,” Gov. Rell said. “Yet many of the hospitals in Connecticut are struggling. Some of the largest hospitals in some of our biggest cities, including Hartford and Waterbury, face serious financial problems, while smaller community hospitals battle daily to attract and retain doctors and nurses and buy the high-tech equipment that modern medicine requires.

“This panel will examine not only the current financial health of Connecticut’s hospitals but residents’ access to care. Emergency room utilization, affordability and alternative delivery of primary care will all be reviewed. The ‘Certificate of Need’ process – the state permitting process for determining where certain medical services are provided, when hospitals may close or expand and so on – also will be analyzed.”

The Governor said she wants the panel to report its findings by December 31.

The new state budget nearly triples the financial aid offered to the state's 30 acute-care hospitals, while also giving health care providers their first increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates in 21 years. The two-year, \$36 billion budget signed last month by Governor Rell includes a \$30 million appropriation in fiscal 2008 to the state's Hospital Hardship Fund to help the state's 30 acute-care hospitals balance their books. The appropriation is almost three times larger than the \$11 million available to hospitals in fiscal 2007. Though the fund is commonly referred to as the "distressed hospital fund," any of the state's 30 acute-care hospitals can apply for a grant.

The task force is part of Governor Rell's broader efforts to ensure that all residents of Connecticut have access to quality, affordable health care. Governor Rell's Charter Oak Health Plan to bring affordable health coverage to uninsured adults was approved by the General Assembly this year.

"The Charter Oak Health Plan will bring coverage to adults who don't have medical benefits through work and don't qualify for a public program such as Medicaid, Medicare or the HUSKY Plan," Governor Rell said. "This is an historic first for Connecticut because currently thousands of adults without affordable group coverage are going without health coverage. My new Charter Oak Health Plan will fill that gap in a cost-effective way."

The Charter Oak Health Plan blends reasonable cost for the participant with a "safety net" subsidy for the lowest-income uninsured adults—those who either do not qualify for the HUSKY Plan because they are slightly over-income or because they do not have children, or both. The Plan is funded with \$13 million for startup, program and preparation costs over the next two fiscal years. The program costs are based on a sliding scale premium assistance plan for enrollees with incomes up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. The goal is to offer a menu of credible coverage with monthly premiums as low as \$75 for low-income residents and no more than \$250 for those with higher incomes.

The Charter Oak Health Plan's projected start date is now July 2008, pushed back from Governor Rell's initial target timeframe of fall 2007. Governor Rell has asked DSS Commissioner Starkowski to convene a planning team and begin development of a request for proposals to the insurance industry nationally with the goal of offering credible, affordable coverage to begin next July.

Rep. DelGobbo serves the 70<sup>th</sup> Assembly District of Naugatuck in the state House of Representatives. He is ranking member on the legislature's budget-writing Appropriations Committee and a member of the Energy and Technology Committee and the Public Safety and Security Committee.