

Wisconsin Health Care Costs Expose Do Nothing Leadership in Madison

Written by Citizen Action of Wisconsin, Robert Kraig
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<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/health-care-costs-s5.jpg>



Wisconsin has 2nd highest health insurance costs in America, an astounding 81% above the national average, while Governor Walker and Republican Legislative Majority do nothing.

STATEWIDE - A new report showing Wisconsin has the second highest medical costs in the country reinforces what health care advocates have been saying for years about the state's health care cost crisis. The [report from the Health Care Cost Institute](#), based on claims data from the nation's largest insurers, found that the cost of medical services in Wisconsin are an astounding 81% above the national average.

Citizen Action of Wisconsin's [annual health insurance cost ranking report](#), published for ten consecutive years, has documented a more than tripling of Wisconsin health insurance costs since 2000. Citizen Action of Wisconsin also documented late last year [a large gap in costs between Wisconsin and neighboring Minnesota](#), including a deeply troubling 46% increase in deductibles in Wisconsin for this year alone.

Skyrocketing health care costs threaten the right of every Wisconsin family to control their own healthcare decisions and receive the care they need when they need it. According to [a recent survey](#), 83% of doctors have patients who have foregone or delayed treatment because of high out-of-pocket costs. To be priced out of medical care is as much of a violation of freedom as the outright denial of coverage.

Much higher than average healthcare costs is also an unnecessary drag on Wisconsin's economy, increasing the cost of doing business and living in the Badger state.

As shocking as Wisconsin's health care costs are, even more stunning is the lack of constructive policy making on the issue in Madison. Neither the Governor or the majority in the Legislature has made health care costs a major agenda item.

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For example, Senator **Chris Larson** and Representative **Debra Kolste** introduced [a rate review bill](#)

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hich would have required health insurance companies to gain pre-approval for large rate increases. The bill also got to the heart of the medical service price problem identified by the Health Care Cost Institute, requiring insurers that use medical costs as a justification for rate increases make negotiated medical service prices with hospitals and other providers public. The bill did not even receive a legislative hearing, let alone a vote in either house of the Legislature.

“Wisconsin’s much higher than average health care costs cannot be blamed on the Affordable Care Act. The refusal of Governor Walker and the Legislature to take any meaningful action on the health care cost crisis is public policy malpractice of the highest order,” said Robert Kraig, Executive Director of Citizen Action of Wisconsin. “The next stage of health reform must focus on cost and value. High healthcare costs are rooted in the collusion of the health insurance industry and the large hospital systems to keep prices secret, confusing for patients, and largely unregulated.”