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Prevention-Minded Candidate Announces Campaign For Indiana Senate

Steve Keltner, candidate for Indiana Senate, says government leaders should look at government like physicians look at medicine and remember: "It's far easier, less expensive, and healthier to prevent a problem than to fix a crisis."

Keltner believes that his background in the medical field is particularly valuable in his approach to improving government. Keltner has been on the front lines of healthcare for the past six years, serving in an overcrowded ER filled with medically underserved Hoosiers. What he's seen there has become a metaphor for many areas of government. "By failing to address the problem of affordable health care, we're forced to spend 80% of healthcare dollars on crisis intervention, and the result is far less desirable," said Keltner. "I'd like to see us avoid that point by investing in patient education and prevention on the front end," he added.

Keltner views the property tax fiasco that hit the state last year as a perfect example of a missed opportunity for preventative legislation. "That was no bolt out of the blue," he said. "For years the signs of trouble were obvious. Yet our elected officials stood back and watched it happen. Action should have been taken so that folks like those in Meridian-Kessler wouldn't have been put into such a fiscally unhealthy position."

Keltner wants voters to have a clear-cut idea of the kinds of things he wants to accomplish in the Senate, things that will avert bad outcomes.

One example of Keltner's common-sense approach is to offer legislation allowing schools to tutor children unless the parents specifically "opt out." Many times children miss opportunities for free tutoring because parents refuse or forget to sign a permission slip. "Children should not miss opportunities because a slip of paper isn't returned," Keltner said.

He points to the following examples of other issues he would tackle:

1. Health care needs an overhaul starting with protection of patient rights. "Being held responsible for bills years after service is unfair," Keltner said. "I would propose legislation requiring that all claims be settled within 30

to 45 days. Reimbursement for medical services is the responsibility of the insurance company, not the patient. Once an insurance card and co-payment are presented, payment should no longer be the patient's concern if deductibles are met."

2. To lower monthly premiums, many Hoosiers have chosen higher deductibles and greater out-of-pocket expenses. Keltner believes patients should be able to shop for the best prices on routine services in order to maximize their healthcare dollars. Such price transparency will reduce the prices to a fair market value for all Hoosier. "Currently, shopping for health services is like dining at a restaurant with not prices on the menu. Most of us can't afford that kind of luxury."
3. West Virginia requires Medicaid recipients to keep regularly scheduled physician appointments and reduces recipients' benefits if they use hospital emergency rooms for routine problems. "Indiana must start requiring responsible use of Medicaid dollars as well," Keltner said. "We must give people an incentive, whether it's negative or positive, to be responsible with the taxpayer benefits they receive. Other states are doing it - we should too," Keltner said.

In addition, Keltner points out current laws restrict payment for home-care organizations like Visiting Nurse Services, but will pay hospitals thousands of dollars for the same care. "It's ridiculous the system will make a patient pay out-of-pocket to go home, but will pay expenses if they remain in the hospital. A minor change in legislation would rectify this situation and return large savings to the taxpayers who provide Medicaid funding. "This would be one of my first priorities as a legislator," says Keltner.

4. Despite the fact that families average two children nationally, the Indiana welfare system provides benefits for up to five children. A full 50% of the children in Indiana are born into the Hoosier Healthwise system. "We need to update benefits provided by taxpayers to reflect today's society," Keltner said. "I want people to share in the joys of parenting, but we need to do so sensibly."
5. Single parents working and receiving childcare assistance are currently penalized if they work harder. "The formula is so inflexible that parents attempting to earn a little extra money for Christmas presents will lose their childcare benefits. With no childcare, they can't work or go to school. The result is many parents are forced back on full government assistance." Keltner feels that making the formulas more flexible will

encourage parents, not penalize them, for trying to better provide for their families. "We want to offer a hand up, not force handouts," Keltner said.

6. Hoosiers don't enjoy two things -- sorting recyclables and paying taxes. But one can have a huge impact on the other. Keltner proposes a large network of small businesses to create a recycling industry that could produce 70,000 new jobs in Indiana. "We'll be taking those people off unemployment, Medicaid and welfare AND increasing the tax base, not to mention generating almost \$500 million in revenue for the state each year." Other states have had success in this area. "If they can do it, we can too," Keltner said. "I would propose legislation supporting an explosion of small business growth to facilitate this industry. It's a green strategy both financially and environmentally."
7. The Indianapolis metropolitan region needs mass transit. Eight years ago the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) identified the Northeast corridor as having the greatest need for traffic reduction. Since then, nearly \$2 billion in airport and downtown investment are in the works and population growth has exploded in surrounding cities. Unfortunately, infrastructure was not properly addressed alongside that investment. "The entire region needs sidewalks, bike lanes, and park-and-ride locations to facilitate regional commuting," Keltner said. Keltner would like to see these improvements made first to determine if financing a multi-million dollar fixed-rail line is sensible. Bus service from Fishers and neighboring cities has been very successful and can be run by private companies without taxpayer funding. But the infrastructure must be put into place to make it work.

In addition, Keltner points to growing trends in the work place. "More people are demanding flex-time and the ability to telecommute at least part-time. Employees want it, and more employers find that it's a viable alternative to having people in the office every day." Even the federal government is getting into the act with the Telework Bill of 2008, which allows federal employees to work from home at least 20 hours each two-week pay period. "I would propose the same at the state level," Keltner said." We must embrace these new trends as part of the solution. Obviously it doesn't work in every industry or in every office, but where it can work, we should encourage it."

Steve Keltner wants government to make sense and he's ready to propose legislation that will put Indiana at the forefront of sensible government strategies that work - even if their conventionality defies political convention. "People elect officials for much the same reason they hire doctors: They want someone to watch out for their well-being. When warnings arise, we expect to be alerted,

before disaster strikes. If you have a stroke after your doctor says your high blood pressure or cholesterol are nothing to worry about, you'd get a new doctor. If your legislator fails to avert crisis, you'd vote in a new legislator."

For more information about Steve Keltner and his candidacy, please visit www.votekeltner.com.