

Obama Transition Team Health Care Listening Session Draws a Crowd

Approximately seventy persons, including physicians, consumer advocates, and patients attended the December 30th Health Care “Listening Session” sponsored by MMA, the Maine Osteopathic Association, and the Downeast Association of Physician Assistants and held at the Augusta Civic Center. During the course of nearly three hours, attendees spoke of problems with the existing system and lamented the lack of a true health care “system.” A summary of the comments is available on the MMA website at www.mainemed.com and a link is also available to a video of the session.

The MMA has sent the summary of comments to the Transition Team to be combined with the comments from more than 4000 such listening sessions held across the country between mid and late December 2008. The comments will hopefully assist President-elect Obama and his health care team as they attempt to craft legislation to reform the way health care is financed and delivered in our country.

MMA Executive Vice President Gordon Smith opened the session by encouraging participants to respect the views of one another and by expressing the hope that patients would come forward with their stories.

MOA President-elect Joel Kase, D.O., MPH moderated the discussion and asked for feedback on seven different questions prepared by the Transition Team. The first question was the broadest and asked participants to identify the biggest problem with the system. Responses included the comment that there was no “system,” that care was fragmented, and that costs are too high. Many of the comments focused on the current base of employer-sponsored coverage and the need for more transparency of costs and price. Several speakers advocated for more focus on public health and individual responsibility.

State representatives Lisa Miller, MPH and Sharon Treat, JD attended the session and noted some of the attempts the state had made to address cost and transparency. Representative Miller is now on the Appropriations Committee and Representative Treat serves as House Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Insurance & Financial Services.



*Above:
Belfast Family Physician
David Thanbauser, MD
addresses first
question presented.*



*Above: MMA EVP Gordon Smith
interviewed by veteran State
House reporter Mal Leary.*

