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The media's job is to
interest the public in
the public interest.

- John Dewey



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Report: West Virginians "Priced Out" Of Health Insurance

July 8, 2009

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Health insurance premiums in West Virginia have risen more than seventy-five percent since 2000, according to figures from Families USA. Renate Poer with the *West Virginia Center On Budget And Policy* says it's reached the point where a health plan on the open market costs more than thirty percent of the median annual income in the state.

"A typical policy for a family now costs 16,000 dollars a year. The median household income is about 40,000 dollars per year in West Virginia."

Poer says the cost of health insurance is outstripping people's ability to pay in that state.

"Insurance premiums have gone up 75 percent. Wages have not gone up. People are being priced out of the market completely."

Poer says West Virginia is among the states where people must pay the highest percentage of their income people for insurance. She says it's estimated that four West Virginians a week die prematurely for lack of medical insurance coverage. She favors a strong public option of the kind being considered in Congress now, though opponents there have attacked that plan as big-government competition that threatens the private health insurance industry.

More on the Families USA report is at tr.im/r5uc

Dan Heyman, Public News Service - WV

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