

## HB 2067 - DIGEST

Finds that: (1) Access to necessary and effective health services is an essential need of all human beings, yet almost six hundred thousand people in the state of Washington lack health insurance coverage. Lack of access to health coverage results in increased rates of preventable disease, premature death, and increased cost of publicly funded medical care;

(2) The primary method used to pay for necessary care in Washington state is health insurance, whether financed by private or public funds;

(3) The cost of health insurance is rising substantially faster than the rate of inflation. These costs are making it increasingly difficult for employers to find and provide decent health benefits to their employees, and have a significant impact on the viability of businesses in Washington state. Moreover, increasing health care costs limit employers' ability to provide wage increases to their employees, negatively impacting workers' standard of living. Increasing costs also result in hardship to employees and their families, particularly low-wage workers, who are being forced to bear an increasing portion of this cost burden. State and local governments also are straining under the pressure of rising health care costs;

(4) Despite increases in overall health care spending, health care providers are faced with insufficient compensation from publicly funded programs and the growing complexity of administrative requirements, from both public and private purchasers; and

(5) The state of Washington has a strong interest in ensuring that all of its residents have access to health coverage, improving the health status of its residents, and containing rising health care costs.

Directs the joint task force to report its findings and recommendations to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature by November 15, 2006.