

July 26, 2005

House Passes Small Business Health Fairness Act
Measure Advocated by Congressman Akin

WASHINGTON , DC - Today, the United States House of Representatives passed a measure to reduce the cost of quality health care for many of America's uninsured by creating associated health plans (AHPs). AHPs would give small businesses the opportunity to band together to purchase affordable health insurance for their employees. The bill passed by a vote of 263 to 165.

Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO), Chairman of the Small Business Subcommittee on Regulatory Reform and Oversight, cosponsored the legislation.

"In 2003, there were an estimated 45 million Americans without health insurance. Small businesses employ over 60 percent of those currently uninsured," said Akin. "Without question, cost is often the biggest barrier to affordable health insurance for small businesses. Too often, I hear from small businesses owners back in my District in Missouri that the affordability of health insurance is their number one concern. While large employer-sponsored health plans have seen an average 12 percent increase in health insurance premiums, small businesses have been faced with annual premium increases of up to 50 percent, forcing many firms to drop coverage altogether."

"By allowing small firms to join an association health plan as H.R. 525 would do, small employers would enjoy greater bargaining power because they would become part of a larger bargaining force, enabling them to offer their employees the same advantages and benefits that are currently available to larger companies," concluded Akin.