

Arkansas House Newsletter

January 7, 2015

Final Column from Arkansas House Speaker Davy Carter

I started my term as Speaker with a commitment to the people of Arkansas that we would take care of the business at hand and not turn into Washington D.C. I had to make difficult decisions at times that weren't always popular, but I leave here with the comfort in knowing that we honored that commitment.

Few could have seen how the health care debate would unfold on the day I was sworn in. While state leaders nationwide saw this as a question with a yes or no answer, we rolled up our sleeves, put in hundreds of hours of hard work, and provided an alternative and national leading solution - the Private Option.

This was a joint effort with leaders on both sides of the aisle, state agency directors, health care workers and the Governor. It was the perfect example of what our state stands for- putting our people over our politics. Together, we set an example of leadership for the rest of the country, and that's the way it should be. When you have an issue or problem you come together and provide solutions. Families do it. Churches do it. Businesses do it. And so should your political leaders.

Today, I am proud to report that we are off to a good start. Arkansas has the steepest reduction in our uninsured in the nation, down from 22.5% to 12.4% just this year, and premiums have decreased not only for the Private Option, but for those individuals who qualify for the healthcare exchange. And hospitals in our state have seen a 46.5% decrease in patients admitted without insurance. It has led to a decrease of more than \$60 million in uncompensated care costs. Working together, we have laid the foundation of real health care reform in our country.

And lest we forget, this enabled us to pass one of the largest tax cut packages in our state's history, putting money back into the pockets of hard-working Arkansas taxpayers.

I want to thank the people of Arkansas. It has been a great honor in serving you. I love our state, and I am proud to be an Arkansan.