Paxton Daily Record

Paxton, Ford County, Illinois

Friday, October 1, 2004
4 Pages

Volume 108 / Number 188

35 Cents

Democrat hopes to win Ford County despite voting history

Says health care plan will benefit all, especially seniors

By Will Brumleve

Despite most Ford County voters typically voting for a Republican candidate to represent the Illinois 15th Congressional District, Democratic candidate David Gill has high hopes he can win the county, along with the 22-county district in the November election.

Gill, who is running against U.S. Rep. Tim Johnson (R-Sidney) to represent the district, said one reason he thinks he has a chance is because he wants to implement a national health care plan that would benefit Republicans and Democrats alike.

The plan, which covers preventive, dental, mental health and long-term care, calls for no out-of-pocket expenses for seniors and fully paid health care for all Americans, from birth to death.

"We think we can win all 22 counties," said Gill, "because this health care issue touches everybody, regardless of whether they're on the left or right, young or old, rich or poor."

Gill, an emergency room doctor for the past five years at John Warner Hospital, Clinton, stopped by two Paxton nursing homes Sept. 15 to voice the need for the plan.

Gill made his first stop a little after 10 a.m. at Heartland Health Care Center, 1001 E. Pells St., before moving on to Illinois Knights Templar Home, 450 E. Fulton St., at noon.

At Heartland, Gill spoke with roughly 30 residents.

He said about 44 million Americans are not covered by the country's current health care system, including about 8.5 million children, partly due to rising health insurance premiums. Gill said that if health insurance premiums continue to climb, by 2006 it is expected that the average family premium will cost $14,600 a year.

Gill said his plan will save consumers money by cutting down on HMO and insurance industry profits and overhead expenses. "The federal government would not dictate how medicine is practiced, as the for-profit HMOs and insurance industry have done for so long," Gill said.

Instead, a 2 percent tax paid by individuals would replace all costs incurred by insurance premiums, co-

Residents at Heartland Health Care Center in Paxton visited recently with Dr. David Gill, the Democratic candidate to represent the 15th Illinois Congressional District in the November election. Gill said he has high hopes to win the county's votes because of his proposed national health care plan that would benefit all, especially senior citizens.

pays and deductibles, meaning the average family would pay about $760 a year. Gill said most families pay anywhere from $1,200 to $15,000 per year under the current system.

Gill's health care plan also will combat the Bush administration's recent implementation of a 17.5 percent hike in premiums for Medicare beneficiaries, effective 2005. The increase is expected to cause a senior citizen's monthly payments to climb from $66 to $78.20.

"It's especially important to seniors," Gill said. "They use more health care, and it seems they have to deal with every increasing out-of-pocket cost while living on essentially a fixed income."

Gill told Heartland residents and staff a story that demonstrates the need for the change. He said he recently cared for a 73-year-old woman whose tongue was swollen enough to choke off her airway due to an allergic reaction. The condition had been progressing for about five hours.

When Gill asked the patient's daughter why her mother had waited so long to seek treatment, she replied, "Mother was worried about the bills she would have to pay."

Tort/malpractice reform

Gill also spoke with Heartland staff about the need for tort reform and malpractice reform, for which a bill is being voted on this week.

Malpractice premiums have been skyrocketing lately, said Gill. "Most doctors are paying twice what they were paying two years ago," he said. "It's forcing a lot of doctors to rethink whether they want to stay in Illinois."

Gill said some doctors are crossing the border to Indiana, and the result has been a lack of special surgeons downstate.

"As a legislative body, we need to get the books open and change the profession," Gill said. "I think the status quo is unacceptable, not just for doctors, because it affects all of society. The costs get passed on to others."

Gill against Iraq war

Gill said he is against the Iraq war but is in favor of the war on terrorism.

"I'm all for the war on terrorism," Gill said. "But I think ... what we've done in Iraq has been detrimental to combatting terrorism."

He said President Bush's decision to invade Iraq "violates international law, has shredded our international relationships and has turned a majority of the world's people against us.

"And there's a lack of evidence pointing to Iraq's involvement in Sept. 11 or even bringing any harm to American citizens."

Gill wants to undo Bush tax cuts

Gill supports a return to fiscal conservatism that undoes the tax cuts for the wealthy implemented by President Bush. Those tax cuts, he said, "overwhelmingly benefit" people who make more than $250,000 a year and have created a $7.2 trillion national deficit.

"I recognize that our district is not made up of millionaires," Gill said. "The tax cuts benefit the wealthy and do little for most of the regular people who live in the 15th District."