

## Health care an issue for many

### Murphys group hopes to help change system

By Krissi Krob

As the president-elect's transition team prepares to enter the White House in January, citizens across the country are working to help draft a new health policy for the nation.

In Murphys on Monday, a group moderated by Supervisor Merita Callaway and hosted by Calaveras County Democratic clubs engaged in a roundtable discussion of health care issues and possible solutions. The information collected at that meeting will be sent to Barack Obama's Transition Health Policy Team. Such meetings have been held in cities and towns throughout the United States.

"He's interested in making it work for people and for businesses," Callaway said of Obama's health care proposal,

which he said will provide affordable health coverage for all Americans and reduce the average family's health care costs by up to \$2,500. But, Callaway cautioned, those changes won't happen in Obama's first 100 days in office, and probably not in one term.

Participants discussed what they feel are the biggest health care problems in Calaveras County. Those items included the absence of a trauma center, not enough specialists, price of prescription drugs and cost of insurance.

Meegan Lucore, a speech therapist, shared the story of her husband, Shane, who was kicked in the face by a horse in November 2006. The impact shattered his jaw and broke all of his teeth, requiring surgery and several specialists. Because specialists were "out of network," according to her insurance company's guidelines, it has been a battle over how much and whether it will pay for services, Meegan said. Out-of-pocket expenses during the last two

years have amounted to about \$34,000, she said.

"I feel absolutely rocked," she said, adding, "Because you get sick or injured, you shouldn't have to lose your life savings."

Lucore said she felt insurance companies should have to disclose their profit margins and require a case manager to oversee each new medical case.

Others at the meeting also objected to the amount of money insurance and drug companies make on people's illnesses.

"We used to have a health care system and now we have a medical business system," said Addie Jacobson.

Many in the room took objection to some aspects of Obama's plan, saying that instead a single-payer plan might work, in which all health care costs would be paid out of one universal fund. The majority of the room indicated that they would support a single-payer system.

Others pointed out things they saw as problems with a



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**These participants hope to help shape the president-elect's health care policies.**

single-payer system, including that it could be difficult to pay for "extras" out of one's own pocket and other costs associated with such a system.

"Sure, I want health care for everybody," said Murphys resident Billie McArthur, "but for heaven's sake, we're still bailing out car companies. It's not

going to happen."

Another question participants discussed was how public policy could promote healthy lifestyles. Some suggested that incentives be offered to those who maintain a healthy weight, and others discussed how schools can promote outdoor playtime and nutrition.

To share personal stories or submit policy ideas, including health care reform suggestions, to the Obama transition team, visit [change.gov](http://change.gov).

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