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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Hi, Mike. Thanks so much for sending. Hope you're having an OK fall (in Trump-adjusted terms). —Jeff

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 More damage to Vermonters' health care coming, with
2 no help from Trump

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 Legislators will be working hard in the coming session to
4 make sure hospitals do not close. We really need a willing
5 partner in Washington, and that seems unlikely.

####END SUBHED####

6 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

7 OUR HEALTH-CARE "SYSTEM" in Vermont is teetering, while
8 the actions — or lack of them — from the current president might
9 just push it over.

10 Vermonters are paying more and more and feeling they
11 get less and less. Access to health care is limited, evidenced by
12 the wait times many experience to get an appointment.

13 In some cases, there just aren't enough providers, and
14 many are overworked and stretched thin. In other instances,
15 access is limited by what people can afford because of higher
16 premiums, higher deductibles, and higher copayments.

17 And now, in most counties in the state, no insurer will
18 offer a Medicare Advantage plan, affecting thousands of retired
19 Vermonters have used such coverage for accessing health care.

20 Add to the concerns how nine of our 14 hospitals in
21 Vermont are losing money.

22 And Vermont's largest health insurance company, Blue
23 Cross Blue Shield of Vermont, had to borrow \$30 million from
24 Blue Cross Michigan to pay claims this spring. Another year of
25 high increases for premiums are straining budgets at every level
26 in homes, businesses, and government.

27 A crisis point might be coming sooner than later as
28 pointed out by the head of the Green Mountain Care Board in
29 testimony to the Vermont Legislature. Last year, he predicted that
30 in five years we might see hospitals close in Vermont. He now
31 feels it could be within one year.

32 * * *

33 LEGISLATORS WILL BE working hard in the coming session
34 to make sure hospital closures do not happen, but we are a small
35 state with limited resources. We are one of those states that get
36 more back from the federal government than we pay out (thanks
37 to our able congressional delegation).

38 But we really need a willing partner in Washington, and
39 that seems unlikely.

40 That's because the current president seems more
41 concerned with his vengeance campaign and unleashing
42 masked, armed hordes of his private army on our streets. That is a
43 higher priority than to fulfill his campaign promise that "prices
44 will come down on Day 1." Far from it.

45 As prices continue to rise across the board, little has
46 been done to bring down the cost of living to address the
47 “affordability Crisis,” as the current president and his allies like to
48 refer to.

49 And high prices could go up higher for health care very
50 soon.

51 Without the tax credits for the Affordable Care Act,
52 premiums will skyrocket, making health insurance unaffordable
53 for millions of Americans — thousands of them in Vermont. Those
54 notices will go out in November, so be prepared if you get your
55 health insurance through the health care exchange.

56 Then, in the new year, the federal Big Bad Budget Bill
57 will kick scores of Americans off of Medicaid.

58 * * *

59 THE RIPPLES FROM these events will be broad.

60 Health needs will continue, and that’s where people who
61 are uninsured will start showing up in higher numbers at
62 emergency departments, where hospitals are obliged by law to
63 treat them even if they cannot pay. These expenses will have to
64 be borne by hospitals that are already teetering.

65 If we see any economic downturn, lower tax revenues,
66 and greater pressures on services, that’s a recipe for higher state
67 and property taxes or cuts to state services. Not a pretty picture,
68 but a possible scenario we cannot ignore. (And for those who
69 voted for the current president, especially grain farmers, a stark
70 reminder of getting what you voted for.)

71 We can hope for the best, but the road ahead looks like a
72 dirt road in mud season, with ruts that are hard to get out of
73 without the help of a tow.

74 Will we get a tow from Washington, especially regarding
75 health care?

76 * * *

77 IT’S UNDERSTANDABLE if some don’t see this as a major
78 problem right now — especially if you’re healthy and not

79 currently needing health care. Until you're like that guy who saw
80 something thrown and wondered what it was. Then it hit him.

81 Here's hoping the Democrats in Congress hold fast to get
82 a deal on health care during the shutdown.

83 We need an agreement that will resonate right down to
84 the state and local levels for the help that health care in Vermont
85 needs.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

86 **MIKE MROWICKI** has served since 2007 in the Vermont
87 House of Representatives, where he represents Putney and
88 Dummerston in the Windham-4 district.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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