

## Health care costs

As health costs rise and the medical industry evolves, health care is once again on lawmakers' minds.

A special House committee spent the fall looking at ways to cut health costs without sacrificing the quality of care. Among the topics discussed was government-run health insurance for all Vermonters.

Few lawmakers have come out in favor of a state-run system. But Rep. Paul Poirier, D-Barre, wants to at least study the benefits of consolidating all the state-paid programs, which cover state workers, teachers and low-income residents.

Lawmakers are also expected to consider expanding state health insurance and prescription drug programs, possibly by tapping the state surplus or a tobacco lawsuit settlement worth an estimated \$30 million a year.

Rep. David Zuckerman, P-Burlington, sees health care as a top priority. "To have elderly unable to afford prescription drugs and low income people not to have access to preventive and basic maintenance health care is abominable," he said.