

By Gale Rose
reporter@pratttribune.com

Dr. Jim Barnett has a unique perspective on the health care package under consideration in the U.S. Congress.

Barnett, a Republican Kansas Senator running for U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran's seat, has been a practicing physician for 27.5 years and considers health care reform a critical issue facing Congress.

"Significant health reform is needed," Barnett said.

While the democratic side of the Senate is passing health legislation, Barnett doesn't agree with President Barack Obama and the direction he and Congress are taking.

He sees them creating more entitlements and increasing deficit spending. The current health mandate will increase premiums, Barnett said.

One major issue in health reform is people with pre-existing health conditions should have access to health care. Other issues include being able to buy insurance across state lines and tort (lawsuit) reform.

Barnett said he wouldn't order a test without first considering the necessity and cost to the patient.

Now some tests are given to avoid being sued and that is a reason why tort reform is necessary.

He also wants to see policies that give incentives for people to be more responsible for their health including avoiding nicotine, alcohol and obesity. All those issues are preventable and he wants people to take better care of themselves, Barnett said.

He also wants to review unfunded mandates that make it difficult to keep hospitals open and retain doctors. Reimbursements are so low that hospitals are having trouble.

"We need policy makers that understand what is needed to keep hospitals open," Barnett said.

Barnett has been in the Kansas senate for 10 years from District 17. When he decided to run for Moran's seat he questioned Moran about the most important issues and Moran said agriculture and medicine, Barnett said.

Barnett is worried about the farm policy in the House that will prompt cap and trade.

"It's a job killer to agriculture," Barnett said.

He wants Congress to expand trade agreements to open more markets to farmers.

Also in agriculture, he wants to eliminate the death tax. It is hard to keep a family farm going when the children of farmers are saddled with high taxes, some as much as 40 percent, when they inherit the farm.

"That should be eliminated," Barnett said.

On the world scene the world doesn't think we can win a war and we can't continue to be an economic superpower.

He said the No. 1 role of the federal government is to protect the nation both internally and externally. Threats remain and the government needs to take on those challenges. The government also needs to secure the southern boarder with Mexico.

With his unique combination of agriculture and medical background, Barnett said he would provide leadership that will help stop the uncontrolled spending and debt.