By EARL WATT
• Daily Leader
Representative Jerry Moran, and candidate for U.S. Senate, is not against reforming health care, according to his legislative assistant Brian Perkins.
But he is against a massive government takeover, reductions in Medicare reimbursements and unsustainable costs.
Moran favored an incremental approach, according to Perkins, that would include tort reform as well as limits to defensive medical practices.
The issue was discussed this morning at the Liberal Chamber of Commerce meeting room inside the Rock Island Depot during a town hall meeting on health care with Perkins.
“One thing we see as troublesome are the tests doctors have to run,” Perkins said. “An attorney could look at a chart and say, ‘They didn’t run this test. Let’s go with that.’”
Perkins said there was a recent situation in Hays where a person needed a minor foot procedure, but the doctor had to run more than $10,000 in heart tests to protect against any potential lawsuit.
Perkins said Moran was in favor of a plan presented by Sen. Orrin Hatch who proposed caps on attorneys fees.
“The Congressional Budget Office said $54 billion could be saved,” he said. “When reimbursements are at $250 billion, that’s major savings.”
Perkins said that every Republican alternative presented to the Democratic health care bill included tort reform, which would limit lawsuits, but they were all rejected.
According to Perkins, Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean said the reason they were rejected was because trial lawyers were giving Democrats money.
Skilled nursing homes were also facing additional cuts in Kansas due to challenges to the state budget. That with less than full reimbursements from Medicare was causing a strain.
“You can’t treat everybody for 70 cents on the dollar,” Wheatridge Park Care Center Executive Director Jerrold Walter said.
The fear of care centers and hospitals shutting down was a real possibility in rural areas in Kansas if the current reforms are adopted, according to Perkins.
“Larned residents told us if the hospital there closes, they will have to move to be closer to health care,” Perkins said.
Liberal City Commissioner Dave Harrison attended the meeting and questioned how much money insurance companies have spent lobbying Congress.
“I think they are worried,” Perkins said. “A public option would put a strain on private insurance. You have a president who wants single pay insurance. And there are some members of Congress who want that, too.”
Harrison also stated that Canadians have a longer life expectancy than those in the U.S.
“We don’t have the greatest health care in the world,” Harrison said.
Perkins agreed that changes needed to be made, but that they needed to be incremental.
According to Real Clear Politics, only 35 percent of Americans favor the current proposals in Congress while 61 percent are against the measures.
“We have trouble administering a vaccine and cash for clunkers,” Perkins said. “We thing this is too big a deal to take a risk on a nationalized system.”
Harrison said that Congress has been working on health reform for more than 20 years but has

had no accomplishments.
“Congress keeps putting this off, and it will never be the right time. Passing something, and then tweaking it down the road is better,” Harrison said.
Perkins disagreed.
“We think this is the wrong path,” he said. “We’re talking about $1.8 trillion. This is not small potatoes.”