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DES MOINES FORUM SPEAKERS URGE 2016 CANDIDATES TO FOCUS ON HEALTH COSTS

Des Moines – Two of the nation’s leading experts on health care policy said today that it was critical for 2016 presidential candidates to offer credible proposals to hold down health care costs -- and the federal debt -- in the years ahead.

“The U.S. no longer has just a long-term debt problem,” said Doug Holtz-Eakin, president of the American Action Forum and a former director of the Congressional Budget Office. “It will enter a debt spiral in the second term of the next president, so addressing the debt is now a near-term policy and political imperative, and health care lies at the heart of any real solution.”

At a forum today at Des Moines University, Holtz-Eakin was joined by Kenneth Thorpe, chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University.

“The federal deficit is expected to rise from 2.6 percent of GDP to 4 percent over the next decade,” Thorpe said. “A key to reducing the debt is to reduce the growth in federal spending. A centerpiece of this strategy has to focus on health care, which accounts for over 35 percent of the growth in spending during this period. Strategies for improving the efficiency of our health care system while producing better health outcomes are critical.”

The program was presented by the [Greater Des Moines Partnership](#), an economic and community development organization serving central Iowa, and [First Budget](#), a nonpartisan initiative to raise awareness of the nation’s unsustainable budget policies and encourage presidential candidates to put a high priority on the problem.

Today’s forum marks the start of the 2015 Federal Issue Series that the two organizations are presenting in the Des Moines metropolitan area before the Feb. 1, 2016, Iowa Caucuses.

The next scheduled program in the series, on April 7, will focus on retirement issues, including Social Security. Other programs will examine tax reform, national security, infrastructure and education.

As today’s forum made clear, the federal budget remains on an unsustainable path. The Congressional Budget Office recently [projected](#) that the \$18.1 trillion federal debt would grow by \$7.6 trillion or more over the next decade, and will continue to rise after that.



First Budget

Their Budget. Our Future.

So the next president and members of Congress in both parties must scrutinize all parts of the federal budget – spending as well as revenue – and pursue comprehensive fiscal reforms. Such reforms can foster economic growth, strengthen the country and build a better future for our children and future generations.

“As we begin the 2016 Caucus season, we are excited to provide opportunities for the Des Moines business community to engage on issues that will all be necessary for the next president to address,” said Joseph Jones, senior vice president for government relations and public policy at the Greater Des Moines Partnership. “These issue forums give us the chance to partner with First Budget to bring in national experts to speak with our members. The result will be more informed citizens and sharpened engagement with candidates on issues.”

Media Contact:

Sara Imhof

319-471-0236

simhof@concordcoalition.org

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First Budget is a joint nonpartisan initiative of [The Concord Coalition](#) and the [Campaign to Fix the Debt](#) to raise awareness of the dangers posed by the nation’s unsustainable budget policies and make solving this problem a high priority for the 2016 presidential candidates, starting with the early nominating contests in Iowa and New Hampshire. Visit firstbudget.org to learn more and follow us on twitter: [@concordc](#) and [@fixthedebt](#).



The Greater Des Moines Partnership is the economic and community development organization serving Central Iowa, united to drive economic growth with one voice, one mission, and as one region. Together with 21 Affiliate Chambers of Commerce and 5,300 business members, the Partnership grows opportunity, creates jobs, and promotes the best place to build a business, a career, and a future.