

BRIEFING BOOK

News and views from the Louisiana Capitol

Sunday, December 14, 2008

Health plan attacked

Gov. Bobby Jindal's health care plan is drawing harsh criticism from a familiar figure as it comes up for its first major test at the Legislature this week. Former Health and Hospitals Secretary David Hood, who served as Jindal's top deputy at the health department in the mid-1990s before taking over the agency when Jindal left, wrote a detailed critique of the administration's Louisiana Health First Plan and concluded that it falls short on several measures. Hood, now a senior health-policy analyst for the nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council, said the plan doesn't go far enough in dismantling the existing statewide Charity Hospital System, and could result in fewer services being provided as administrative costs rise when the state outsources its Medicaid program to private managed-care organizations. Hood's research also accuses the administration of trying to expand Medicaid coverage to some uninsured populations by using "one-time" dollars that won't be available in the future. Health and Hospitals Secretary Alan Levine, who will try to push the plan through a pair of House-Senate committees this week, responded with a lengthy news release that said Hood's research brief "falls far short of well-researched and balanced analysis." Among other things, Levine denied that the administration plan uses one-time money to cover ongoing expenses, and said the "Community Care" plan that Hood developed while head of the health department has experienced "many failures and limitations."