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Deval Patrick**in Governor's
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**GOVERNOR PATRICK MEETS WITH SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS,
HIGHLIGHTS EFFORTS TO CURB RISING HEALTH CARE COSTS****MetroWest Business Owners Talk Job Creation, Economic Growth**

BOSTON - May 18, 2010 - Continuing the Patrick-Murray Administration's commitment to reduce the burden of rising health care costs on small businesses and working families, Governor Deval Patrick today visited Irwin Engineers, Inc. of Framingham, meeting with Vice President of Operations Lana Carlsson-Irwin and other small-business leaders from MetroWest to discuss how skyrocketing health care costs are affecting local companies.

"We have taken emergency action because companies like Irwin Engineers, Inc. are struggling under the weight of double-digit increases in health insurance premiums," said Governor Patrick. "Small businesses are vital to our regional and state economies, and the time to solve this problem is now."

Along with Carlsson-Irwin, the Governor spoke with Eileen Chernoff of Community Rehab Care. The two business leaders discussed their companies' battle to hold down insurance costs while experiencing double-digit increases year after year, in many instances, preventing them from expansion.

"Even with new, significant deductibles to control costs, premiums for family health insurance have increased 101 percent in 10 years, but the market won't bear that kind of salary increase. This means we all have less money to live on and raise our families," said Carlsson-Irwin. "I know Governor Patrick is working to contain rising premiums and I hope the other players will work with him on this vital issue."

The Governor's Jobs Bill, which he filed in February and continues to call for the Legislature to act on, contains several proposals aimed at containing skyrocketing health care costs. The plan also includes measures to provide businesses with access to working capital, ease unemployment insurance costs, extend tax relief to businesses that create new jobs, and establish a new organization dedicated to providing the resources businesses need to grow.

In an effort to provide immediate relief for small business owners, Governor Patrick also directed the Commissioner of the Division of Insurance, under existing authority, to disapprove base health insurance rates deemed unreasonable or excessive. On April 1, the Division of Insurance disapproved 235 of 274 rate increases proposed by carriers, finding the rates were excessive or unreasonable relative to the benefit provided. Disapprovals held rates at April 2009 levels for thousands of small businesses across Commonwealth, helping businesses and families around the state cut costs.

"The Senate today is continuing its leadership on health care reform, working to implement ways to provide concrete assistance to small businesses to help them bring down costs. I'm very pleased that Governor Patrick chose to speak about health care costs at a small business in my district, as this issue continues to rank among the top concerns among the small businesses I speak with. Working together, the Senate and the Governor are working hard to reduce health care costs and do it now," said Senator Karen Spilka.

"I am pleased to join Governor Patrick in Natick today to highlight the urgent need to curb costs of health insurance for Massachusetts businesses. Small businesses are truly the economic engine of our Commonwealth, and I look forward to working with the Administration to implement measures that will make the cost of health coverage more sustainable for employers," said Representative David Linsky.

"The continuous rise in health insurance costs is an ongoing problem for MetroWest area businesses. I applaud Governor Patrick for taking the initiative to work with our small business owners to find solutions to this serious problem," said Representative Alice Peisch.

In addition to reducing health care costs, the Governor's comprehensive job-growth legislation includes a \$2,500 tax credit for

every created and retained full-time equivalent job this year, relief to employers by freezing the unemployment insurance rate increase schedule for 2010, and the consolidation of three agencies responsible for small-business finance into the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation.

Since taking office, Governor Patrick has maintained a strong focus on creating an environment for businesses to grow and create jobs here in Massachusetts by lowering the corporate tax rate, streamlining permitting and cutting state permitting time to six months or less, and investing in the state's broken roads and bridges by putting people to work on hundreds of infrastructure projects across the state.

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