



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 6, 2010

For More Information Contact:
Senator Cowles
at 1-800-334-1465

COWLES APPLAUDS UPCOMING AUDIT OF \$6 BILLION MEDICAID PROGRAM **Legislator Wants Answers on Spiraling Costs of Massive Program**

MADISON – After repeated requests to audit the state’s BadgerCare Plus program by State Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay), the chairpersons of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee announced today that there will be a comprehensive audit of the entire Medicaid program by the non-partisan Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB). A recent report by the non-partisan Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance showed that the cost of Medicaid has risen from \$2.5 billion in 1998 to more than \$6 billion in 2009, an increase of more than 140%.

“It’s time to take a close look at Medicaid, because the cost of the program is growing at an unreasonable rate,” Cowles said. “The state is facing tremendous budget difficulties, and we need to find out if this money is being spent in the most efficient manner.”

Wisconsin’s Medicaid program consists of two subprograms: the longstanding subprogram program for elderly, blind and disabled persons; and BadgerCare Plus, which began in February 2008 and was intended to provide health care to low income families. Enrollment in the program during that time has nearly tripled, to more than one million people.

“It is critical that we get a handle on a program that is as expensive as this one,” said Cowles. “With costs for the program increasing by 8% per year, there needs to be a thorough review so we can find cost savings and efficiencies.”

Cowles, a member of the Joint Committee on Audit, has consistently looked for ways to make government programs more efficient and more accountable to the taxpayers. Audits that Cowles has requested, including an audit of the state’s large computer projects, have resulted in saving millions of dollars for taxpayers.

“Wisconsin is facing difficult economic times right now, and the last thing we need is a runaway spending program that has too little oversight. I am confident that a review by the Audit Bureau can help provide us with answers on how to control costs and give the taxpayers the best bang for their buck,” Cowles concluded.

-30-