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MICHIGAN

HEALTH: Insurance debate grows

January 17, 2008

A legislative debate about whether to change rules governing Michigan's health insurance market for individuals is escalating.

A coalition supporting legislation backed by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan was announced Wednesday in Lansing. Consumers for Fair and Affordable Insurance Reform includes business, labor and other companies and the University of Michigan, which sold its M-CARE subsidiary to Blue Cross last year.

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The opposition includes Aetna and other insurance companies, and the AARP.

MEDICAL DEVICES: Stryker must make fixes

Federal regulators have ordered medical device maker Stryker Corp. to fix a host of long-standing problems in its manufacturing of hip replacement parts that have triggered multiple patient complaints and forced some to have follow-up surgeries.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration told Kalamazoo-based Stryker in a letter that it was aware that the company has received patient complaints since January 2005 about a range of problems, including improper fitting of hip implants that caused bone fractures. Patients also have complained about pain, difficulty walking and squeaky joints, and some have said that pieces of implant parts broke off or wore unevenly.

Stryker officials declined an interview request Wednesday from the Associated Press, but provided a prepared statement.

"We take these matters very seriously," it said.

TAXES: Surcharge targeted

Efforts already have started in the Legislature to get rid of a 22% surcharge on Michigan businesses.

A bill introduced Wednesday in the state House would repeal the Michigan Business Tax surcharge passed late last year. The bill was introduced by Dan Acciavatti, a Republican from Macomb County's Chesterfield Township.

He says the tax increase was not needed.

Democrats who control the House likely will oppose the bill.

The business tax surcharge was passed as part of a compromise. It allowed the repeal of an unpopular sales tax on some services in Michigan.

TECHNOLOGY: Site celebrates Ali

Berrien Springs-based Muhammad Ali Enterprises LLC will celebrate the boxing champion's 66th birthday today by launching an online store at www.ALI.com, featuring autographed items and licensed products.

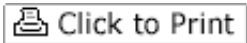
Also offered will be photographs that have never been available to the public.

"We are transforming our Web site into a platform offering even more original content about Muhammad," said Ronald DiNicola, president and CEO of Muhammad Ali Enterprises LLC. "We will be creating an online global community of Ali fans and we want everyone to be a part of it."

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