September 26, 2006

To all state employees:

This year’s annual open enrollment to make choices about your health and other fringe benefits will be held November 1st through the 14th. This is also a good time to learn more about health care issues that directly affect you and your family, your neighbors and friends, and the state and the nation as a whole.

The Department of Employee Relations, which administers your Advantage health benefits program, has been working with other state agencies and groups like the Smart Buy Alliance, a coalition of health care purchasers representing nearly 3/5 of Minnesotans, to improve health care costs and quality in Minnesota. As part of this effort, we are joining with many other employers around the state to encourage you to tune in to a special four-part television series to be aired this October called “Remaking American Medicine.”

This series is important because there are significant needs and opportunities to improve the American health care system that everyone should know about. As many as 98,000 Americans die in hospitals each year of preventable medical errors. One million more are injured. In fact, medical errors kill as many people per year as breast cancer, HIV-AIDS and car accidents.

Remaking American Medicine is produced by the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and explores the health care quality crisis and the innovative solutions being undertaken by providers, patients and their families to transform the care provided by the institutions on which we all depend. The four programs air on PBS Thursdays, October 5-26, 2006, 9 – 10 p.m. Peabody Award and Emmy Award-winner John Hockenberry, formerly of NBC and NPR, hosts.

Each program examines critical health care issues facing Americans today including patient safety, medical and medication errors, hospital-acquired infections, family-centered care and effective management of chronic disease. Rather than assign blame for the failings in health care, Remaking American Medicine offers solutions by showcasing the stories of individuals and institutions who are working to ensure better health care for everyone.

We hope you will take the opportunity to watch Remaking American Medicine and to learn more about the health care system. For further information please go to http://www.ramcampaign.org/ and to http://www.pbs.org/previews/american_medicine/.

Sent on behalf of:

Governor Pawlenty’s Health Cabinet
- Cal R. Ludeman, Chair and Commissioner, Department of Human Services
- Glenn Wilson, Commissioner, Department of Commerce
- Matt Kramer, Commissioner, Department of Employee Relations
- Peggy Ingison, Commissioner, Department of Finance
- Dianne Mandernach, Commissioner, Department of Health
- Scott Brener, Commissioner, Department of Labor and Industry