

THE CALL

Southwest's Leading Weekly

VOL. 80, NO. 36

KANSAS CITY, MO. WEEK OF MARCH 24 TO MARCH 30, 2000

40 CENTS

INSIDE: THE CALL

Cleely Tyson
Speaks Here
See page 4

Hip-Hop And
Athletes Debated
See page 5

Indigent Health Care Budget Receives Much Needed Funds

By Che Parker

The City Council of Kansas City adopted the \$883 million budget that represents projected city expenditures for the year 2000-2001, on Thursday, March 23.

One of the most important issues under consideration for funding was the budget for indigent health care.

A community forum regarding the state of indigent health care in Kansas City was held Monday night at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage center.

Fifth District Councilman Kelvin L. Simmons, and Third District Councilman Troy Nash hosted the forum that brought together an esteemed panel of health care providers and concerned members of the community.

The forum was prompted by the reductions in the City's 2000-2001 Preliminary Budget which may have depleted funding for health and medical care by over \$360,000.

Continued on page 17



CITY COUNCILMEN CALL ATTENTION TO INDIGENT HEALTH CARE... City Councilmen Kelvin Simmons and Troy Nash, seen pictured with Senator Mary Bland, held a forum on Monday, at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center, that called for the restoration of the city's health budget. "Restoring the \$366,715 would send the right message to our citizens," Councilman Simmons said. -- CALL Photo by Jerry Lockett

Indigent Continued from page 3

The Kansas City Health department, which is facing a reduced budget, is responsible for distributing funds to the safety net health care providers.

The safety net is faced with an increasing uninsured population, rising medical costs, and changes in Medicaid that have caused significant cash flow problems for a number of safety net providers.

"One day you, or I, could fall through a hole in the safety net," warned community leader Dianne Cleaver.

Providers speculate that if there were no safety net, rates of death and serious illness would increase, and area employers would incur dramatic financial losses due to lost productivity of ill, uninsured workers and their children.

Senator Mary Bland added that, "We must be mindful that we are fighting a major health care battle."

On Thursday, the Council decided to restore \$375,000 to the indigent health care budget.

"I feel good about it. We were able to get the money back. Now we have some long term decisions to make about indigent health care," stated Councilman Simmons.

The decision to allot an additional \$106,000 to the indigent health care budget fell short by one vote.

The funds were instead allocated to the City Market, and the police DNA budget.

"Human capital is more important than anything else," Councilman Simmons stated.

"We had to have a dialogue within the community. This is a very vital issue," stated Councilman Simmons.

The loss of funding would greatly affect what is known as the health safety net. The safety net is a system of care that offers basic health and preventive services, as well as complex medical services, to all residents of Kansas City, regardless of ability to pay.

Safety net providers include the Cabot Westside Clinic, Children's Mercy Hospital, Swope Parkway Health center, and several other non-profit hospitals and health centers.

In 1998, safety net members provided services for over one million outpatient visits and long term care to over 200,000 individuals.

Thomas Maddox, assistant director of the Kansas City Health department stated that, "The public health department has a funding problem that is real"