

## Fewer employers offer health insurance

*by UPI*

WASHINGTON -- The number of employers offering health insurance to workers has dropped 9 percent since 2000, an annual Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation said. The decline is even steeper among small employers: 45 percent currently offer employees insurance, compared to 58 percent in 2001, an annual survey by the non-partisan foundation showed. The data were reported by USA Today. Employers also have raised workers' share of insurance costs as premiums have risen several times the inflation rate in recent years, USA Today said. Workers paid an average \$273 per month this year for their share of premiums versus \$160 in today's dollars in 1999, a 70 percent increase, the survey said. The majority of Americans are insured through employers and the decline in employer-paid health benefits has invigorated discussion over fundamental changes for the nation's health system, USA Today said.

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