

PRESS RELEASE

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Texas Groups: Texans Will Lose Big if Health Care Repealed

(AUSTIN, Texas) - As Congress prepares to vote to repeal the federal health reform law this afternoon, Cover Texas Now, a coalition of consumer and faith-based organizations, reminds state lawmakers of the high cost of repeal and the opportunity we have to make health care more secure for Texans.

“Repealing national health reform will be detrimental for consumers,” said coalition member and TexPIRG advocate Melissa Cubria. “Consumers will face significantly higher insurance premiums and could see costly coverage denials and price discrimination if efforts to repeal the federal health care law prevail in Congress or in the courts.”

Added Kevin Moriarty, president and chief executive officer of Methodist Healthcare Ministries, “The state of Texas has the most to gain from the full implementation of healthcare reform; to repeal this law would be a devastating blow to the least served in our community.”

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott has signed onto a federal lawsuit urging the roll back of the law, and Washington's intensely partisan debate over health care threatens to spill over to Austin, as the Governor and state legislators consider key implementation decisions.

If health reform is repealed, Texans would lose the many popular changes already helping them today, including:

- New consumer protections that eliminate pre-existing condition exclusions for kids; stop insurance companies from dropping Texans once they get sick; end lifetime caps on benefits; allow young adults to stay on their parents' coverage

until 26; phase out co-pays and deductibles for preventive care; and strengthen Texans' rights to choose their doctor, access emergency services, and appeal insurer denials of care.

- Closing the “doughnut hole” in Medicare prescription costs, with a 50 percent discount on brand-name drugs this year until the gap is phased out. Over 160,000 Texas seniors have already gotten help with their medication costs in 2010.
- No out-of-pocket cost for Medicare annual check-ups and other important preventive tests for seniors.
- Assistance to help pay for the high cost of retiree health benefits for the following: retired state employees and teachers, Texas' major cities, and Texas businesses including American Airlines, HEB, and Shell Oil.
- New requirements that insurance companies spend at least 80 to 85 percent of premium dollars on health care, and that rate increases are justified.

“Over 13 million Texans are covered by private insurance today, but many of these businesses and families struggle to stay covered due to premiums that grow much faster than wages or inflation,” said Stacey Pogue, senior policy analyst with Center for Public Policy Priorities. “Repeal of the Affordable Care Act would halt reforms that will help get costs under control, make sure no Texan can ever be turned down for insurance, and provide sliding–scale help for families willing to pay their fair share of premiums.”

“Health reform will allow Texas to provide affordable, comprehensive health coverage to 95 percent of Texas children allowing them to grow up healthy, miss fewer days of school and improve academic outcomes and long-term success,” said Laura Guerra-Cardus, associate director for the Children’s Defense Fund of Texas. “Providing health care through insurance coverage and primary care doctors is far cheaper for Texans and far better for children than relying on costly emergency rooms.”

With smart implementation of health reform, Texas can gain more federal funds than any other state, bringing \$120 billion into Texas and generating over \$250 billion in economic activity from 2014 -2019.

For Texans to keep the popular provisions of health reform listed above and get the best deal, our federal law must not be repealed and Texas lawmakers must take three critical steps in the 2011 Texas Legislative Session:

- Start building a strong Texas insurance exchange to help families and small businesses get affordable insurance in 2014.

- Make sure the Texas Department of Insurance can enforce popular insurance reforms—like no pre-existing denials for kids, keeping kids on your policy until age 26, and making sure rate hikes are fair.
- Give state agencies and the exchange the authority and tools to build consumer-friendly systems for enrolling in health coverage.

States are in charge of creating new marketplaces for families and small businesses to buy insurance, and how well lawmakers do this will determine how affordable that health coverage is, and how simple the process of shopping for health insurance is.

Cover Texas Now asks state lawmakers to get this right for Texas.

Cover Texas Now can make Texans available for interview from Austin, Fort Worth, and Houston who benefit now and will benefit in the future from reform. For more information, please contact [Blake Hutson](#), campaign organizer, Consumers Union at 512-477-4431, ext. 126.

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About Cover Texas Now

Members

ADAPT of Texas
 Advocacy, Inc.
 Center for Public Policy Priorities
 Consumers Union – Southwest Regional Office
 Children's Defense Fund – Texas
 La Fe Policy Research and Education Center

La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
 National MS Society – Lone Star
 Methodist Healthcare Ministries
 Texans Care for Children
 Texas AFL-CIO
 Texas Impact
 Texas Organizing Project
 TexPIRG

Principles

- Quality affordable health insurance available for every Texan
 - Sustainable health care system
- Long term services and supports provided in the most integrated setting possible
- Maximum federal funding for Texas health care by preserving CHIP and Medicaid
 - Improved small business' access to affordable health insurance
- Common-sense protections for Texas health insurance consumers in state law
 - Transparent, open systems that meet consumers' needs