



CENTER *for*  
RURAL AFFAIRS  
Lyons, NE 68038      Population 963

## Senate Health Care Reform Package Will Secure Coverage and Improve Quality of Care for Millions of Rural Americans

It is of critical importance that the House pass the Senate *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*. This legislation moves us toward health security for all Americans – **including rural Americans** - and would be an historic achievement.

The failure to act and move reform forward would harm millions of rural residents. The Senate *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* will **provide insurance to 5 million additional rural residents**. It will create strong consumer protections, contain health care costs, lower costs of insurance policies, improve choice and competition and require greater accountability from health insurance companies.

### The Senate Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Guarantees secure insurance coverage by:

- Preventing insurers from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions or risky jobs
- Barring insurance companies from basing premiums on health or gender, as many do now
- Restricting insurers from raising rates when people get sick
- Requiring insurers to devote at least 85 percent (80 percent in the individual and small market) of premiums to medical benefits

Creates affordable health care options for rural individuals and families by:

- Assisting small businesses in purchasing health benefits for employees, helping the many rural entrepreneurs or people who work for small businesses and lack employer-based insurance
- Providing subsidies to make health insurance more affordable for 20 million low- and moderate-income families
- Requiring insurers to cap out-of-pocket costs for all families and by eliminating lifetime caps on benefits and medical services
- Significantly expanding Medicaid, including to adults who are currently ineligible in most states. This will result in newly covering 15 million people
- Extending funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) until 2015

The Center for Rural Affairs works to build strong rural communities and create genuine opportunity while engaging people in decisions that affect the future of their communities.

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Allows individuals and families to make informed choices about health insurance by:

- Creating Exchanges, which are vital to contain costs for rural Americans because so many buy insurance on the individual market or have plans with high deductibles
- Funding the immediate startup of state-based consumer assistance offices dedicated to answering questions about insurance options, assisting with enrollment, and helping to navigate the health care system

Improves quality of care by:

- Promoting access to primary and preventive care; strengthening infrastructure by rewarding care coordination, innovation and efficiency within the delivery system
- Shifting the health care system toward more patient- and family-centered care
- Developing pathways to test and evaluate payment and delivery system reforms to improve quality and lower long-term costs
- Including consumer representation in many of the key quality efforts
- Establishing a national strategy to improve delivery of care, patient outcomes and population health, including reduction of racial and ethnic disparities
- Expanding funds for prevention initiatives and targeting racial and ethnic disparities

Strengthens Medicare by:

- Limiting cost-sharing for seniors enrolled in Medicare Advantage, helping the growing percentage of rural Americans who are elderly
- Beginning to close the Medicare Part D “doughnut hole,” or coverage gap. The bill increases the threshold at which Medicare Part D beneficiaries enter the coverage gap by \$500, and it provides a 50 percent discount on the prices of drugs in the doughnut hole

**The Center for Rural Affairs remains committed to passage of comprehensive health care reform as quickly as possible.** Please contact Steph Larsen ([StephL@cfra.org](mailto:StephL@cfra.org)) or Brian Depew ([BrianD@cfra.org](mailto:BrianD@cfra.org)) at 402-687-2100 for additional information and opportunities to collaborate.