One Year Later: The Benefits of the Affordable Care Act for Missouri

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama on March 23, 2010, Missouri residents have more freedom and control over their health care choices. All Americans with insurance are free from worrying about losing their insurance due to a mistake on an application, or having it capped unexpectedly if someone is in an accident or becomes sick. They no longer have to live in fear of double-digit premium increases from their insurance companies without recourse or accountability. The law reduces costs for families and businesses and has already made it illegal for insurance companies to deny care to children because of a pre-existing condition. And it includes substantial new benefits and freedoms for Missouri residents.

Specifically, the Affordable Care Act is already helping the people of Missouri by:

Providing New Benefits and Lowering Costs for Medicare Beneficiaries
Nearly all 44 million beneficiaries who have Medicare, including 957,000 in Missouri, can now receive free preventive services – like mammograms and colonoscopies – as well as a free annual wellness visit with their doctor. Also, more than 82,802 Missouri residents who hit the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap known as the "donut hole" received $250 tax-free rebates, and will receive a 50% discount on brand name prescription drugs when they hit the donut hole this year. By 2020, the law will close the donut hole completely. Taken together, the changes in the law will save seniors enrolled in traditional Medicare more than $3,500 over the next 10 years.

Lowering Taxes for Small Businesses
The law provides $40 billion of tax credits to up to 4 million small businesses, including up to 94,318 in Missouri to help offset the costs of purchasing coverage for their employees and makes premiums more affordable.

Providing Greater Resources for Missouri
The law gives Governors millions of dollars in Federal support for their work to hold down insurance premiums, build competitive insurance marketplaces, provide insurance to early retirees, and strengthen their public health and prevention efforts. So far, Missouri has received $47.2 million from the Affordable Care Act. Grants to Missouri include:

- $674,600 to support a consumer assistance program
- $1 million to plan for a Health Insurance Exchange
- $1 million to crack down on unreasonable insurance premium increases
- $24.3 million to support capital development in community health centers
- $6.5 million from the Prevention and Public Health Fund
- $7.7 million in Therapeutic Discovery Project Program Tax Credits and Grants
- $377,186 for Medicare improvements for patients and providers
- $1 million for demonstration projects to address health professions workforce needs
- $3 million to implement the National Background Check Program for long term care workers

- $1.6 million for Maternal, Infant and Childhood Home Visiting

Providing New Coverage Options for Young Adults
Insurance companies are now required to allow parents to keep their children up to age 26 without job-based coverage on their insurance plans. An estimated 19,700 young adults in Missouri could gain insurance coverage as a result of the law.

Covering Children with Pre-Existing Conditions
Most insurance companies are now banned from denying coverage to children because of a pre-existing condition. An estimated 339,000 kids with a pre-existing condition in Missouri will be protected because of this provision. In 2014, insurers are banned from discriminating against anyone with a pre-existing condition.

Removing Lifetime Limits on Health Benefits
The law bans insurance companies from imposing lifetime dollar limits on health benefits – freeing cancer patients and individuals suffering from other chronic diseases from having to worry about going without treatment because of their lifetime limits. The law also restricts the use of annual limits and bans them completely in 2014. This will protect 3.5 million Missouri residents with private insurance coverage from these limits.

Making it Illegal for an Insurance Company to Drop Coverage When You Get Sick
The law bans insurance companies from dropping coverage when an individual gets sick because of simple mistake on an application. This will protect 378,000 Missouri residents who buy coverage on the individual market from losing their coverage when they need it the most.

Increasing the Value of Health Insurance
Under the law, insurance companies must provide consumers greater value by spending at least 80% of premium dollars on health care and quality improvements instead of overhead, executive salaries or marketing. If they don't, they must provide consumers a rebate or reduce premiums. This means that 3.5 million Missouri residents with private insurance coverage will receive greater value for their premium dollars.

Scrutinizing Unreasonable Premium Increases
New rules in the law require insurers to publicly justify unreasonable premium increases, and strengthen States' abilities to crack down on premium hikes.

Strengthening Economic Growth in Missouri
Since the President signed the Affordable Care Act into law last March, the economy has created nearly 1.4 million private sector jobs, and has grown at an average annual rate of 2.7%. Experts predict that the Affordable Care Act will create anywhere from 250,000 – 400,000 jobs each year.

Lowering Early Retiree Coverage Costs
An estimated 82,600 people from Missouri retired before they were eligible for Medicare and have health coverage through their former employers. Unfortunately, the number of firms that provide health coverage to their retirees has decreased over time. But thanks to the creation of

the Early Retiree Reinsurance Program in the Affordable Care Act, 138 employers in Missouri have been approved to receive support to firms that continue to provide health coverage to their early retirees—lowering their total health care costs. In 2010, employers in Missouri received $6.2 million in payments.

Creating New Coverage Options for Individuals with Pre-Existing Conditions
Residents of Missouri who have been locked out of the coverage system because of a pre-existing condition are now eligible for coverage through a new Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan that was created under the law. To learn more about the plan available in Missouri go here: https://www.pcip.gov/StatePlans.html.

Increasing Support for Community Health Centers
The Affordable Care Act increases the funding available to the more than 1,100 community health centers in all 50 States, including the 185 existing Community Health Centers in Missouri in rural communities and inner cities, enabling them to double the number of patients they serve from 19 million to nearly 40 million by 2015. This builds on a $2 billion investment in Community Health Centers in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which has provided an unprecedented opportunity to serve more patients, create new jobs, and meet the significant increase in demand for primary health care services.

Reducing the Health Care Workforce Shortage
Nearly 19% of Missouri residents live in an underserved area. The law includes new resources to boost the number of doctors, nurses and health care providers in communities where they are needed most. These resources include grants, scholarships, loan repayment programs, as well as increased support for educational institutions that provide training for a range of health care careers.

Voices of Reform

Gail Wechsler, St. Louis, MO: Gail and her husband have a son who will be graduating from college in December. They do not know whether he will have a job with health care benefits immediately, and he has a pre-existing condition. Gail is relieved to know that because of the Affordable Care Act, she will be able to keep her son on their health insurance after he graduates and will not have to worry about him going without insurance as a young adult.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/healthreform/map#healthcare-menu