



Doctors for America Newsletter

Affordable, quality health care for all

MARCH 4, 2011

Dear Doctors for America Member,

Want to know what your colleagues have been doing for the last two weeks to build a better health care system? Read below. You'll also find blog posts from fellow physicians and a summary of key health policy developments.

As always, please write back to us with feedback. We welcome your ideas for improving the newsletter!

~ Physicians Making a Difference ~

Highlights from the last two weeks:

- Over **200 Doctors for America members across California** sent a letter to Governor Jerry Brown and the State Legislature to oppose significant cuts to health care services to fund the state budget gap. **Connie Chen** hand-delivered the letter to Senate Budget Chair Mark Leno's office in San Francisco.
- **Dr. Chris Lillis (Virginia)** delivered a talk on health reform to his local chapter of AARP, continuing to build an impressive resume of educating the public.
- **Dr. Tim McHugh (Idaho)** attended a meeting of pro-health reform physicians and members of the community to discuss how they can work together.
- **Dr. Rebecca Jones (Vermont)** has started working with physicians and leaders around the state as Vermont looks to enact a single-payer system.
- **Dr. Alice Chen (California)** gave a presentation to physicians of the Palmdale Regional Medical Center about health care reform and how it may impact their community.
- **Dr. Kathy Scheirman (Oklahoma), Drs. Heidi Sinclair and Zahid Imran (Louisiana), and Dr. Don Nguyen and friends (Ohio)** attended solidarity rallies on February 26 in their home states supporting Wisconsin public employees' rights have health insurance.
- **Dr. Don Nguyen (Ohio)** is working on multiple fronts when not in the OR. He was featured on WDOA 1210 AM talking about community health centers, myths about the ACA, and looming cuts to health care programs. He also gave a health reform presentation to the Greene County Democratic Party in Xenia, Ohio.
- **Dr. Zaneb Beams (Maryland)** spoke at a local forum on reform implementation. She also attended a hearing on legislation to pay for ACA implementation in Maryland by taxing alcohol consumption.

~ Key Policy Developments ~

Half of Americans Incorrectly Think Reform was Repealed

A [Kaiser Family Foundation poll](#) found that 48% of Americans are unsure of whether health reform is still a law. Of those polled, 22% believed the law has been repealed, and 26% were unsure. This poll comes on the heels of a poll from December that showed that general understanding of health reform amongst the public is quite low, with 45% of the public incorrectly believing the law creates government death panels. See below for what doctors are doing to educate colleagues and the public about the basics of reform.

Government Avoids Shutdown, but Cuts to Health are Looming

On Wednesday, Congress passed a two-week [spending bill](#) that the President signed to avoid a government shutdown as controversy continues over the federal budget. While this bill did not touch federal funding for health reform implementation, the ongoing federal budget negotiations could have serious implications for health reform implementation, community health centers, women's health services, poison control centers, and other key programs in health and other sectors.

Vinson Stays Ruling – States to Continue Implementing Health Reform

Since Judge Vinson of Florida ruled all of health reform unconstitutional on January 31, a big controversy in the 26 states involved in the lawsuit has been whether or not they should keep implementing the law. Yesterday, Judge Vinson [stayed his own ruling](#). That means that all states are still required by law to implement health reform. HHS has one week to file an appeal.

This is only one of dozens of legal challenges to the individual mandate – a requirement in the law that

~ Progress Notes ~

Last week, we rounded out a February's month of posts based on the CDC Health Disparities report:

- "[Seat Belts Save Lives](#)" by Carol Duh (Tennessee)
- "[Your Home and Your Health](#)" by Dr. Nilesh Kalyanaraman (DC)
- "[Teen Pregnancy, Abortions, and the Deficit](#)" by Dr. Brandon Green (Massachusetts)
- "[An Ethnic Community in Chicago Attacks Diabetes and Obesity](#)" by Dr. Ram Krishnamoorthi (Illinois)
- "[Something doctors need to be talking about](#)" by Dr. Sujatha Prabhakhan (Florida)

This week, we return to posts on a variety of health reform topics:

- "[The Social Currency of Primary Care Amongst Medical Students](#)" by Chris Chen (Missouri)
- "[Giving Up on American Innovation?](#)" by Dr. Evan Saulino (Oregon)
- "[Does Our Employer Based Health Insurance Stifle Your Dreams?](#)" by Dr. Nilesh Kalyanaraman (DC)
- "[The Waiting Times Myth](#)" by Dr. Christopher Hughes (Pennsylvania)
- "[The Goal: Smarter Medicine](#)" by Dr. Chris Lillis (Virginia)

~ What You Can Do ~

Help Your Community Be Informed

Forward this newsletter to a friend! As budget battles rage and health reform implementation races forward, a critical step in ensuring that we're building a health care system that helps all our patients is to get informed.

You can also stay informed on the latest developments in health care reform by following DFA on [Progress Notes](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Thank you to all of you who emailed us to let us know what you've been up to. Your e-mails provide the content for the "Physicians Making a Difference" section. Let us hear about what you have been doing by emailing josh.spaulding@drsforamerica.org.

Sincerely,

Alice Chen, Josh Spaulding, Chris Lillis, Nilesh Kalyanaraman, Meghana Desales, Connie Chen, Don Nguyen, Rab Razzak, Milan de Vries, Ken Kelly, Vivek Murthy, and the rest of the Doctors for America Team

everyone has insurance. So far, the score in district courts is 3-2 (constitutional vs. unconstitutional), and only Judge Vinson has gone so far as to discount the entire law in his ruling. Most expect that the question will not be settled by the Supreme Court until 2012 or even 2013. While few expect the entire law to be negated by the courts, some [policy experts](#) are weighing in on how health reform might work without an individual mandate.

States May Be Allowed to Try Different Reform Strategies Starting in 2014

On February 28, President Obama announced to the National Governor's Association that he supports letting states apply for [state innovation waivers](#) on health reform starting in 2014 – three years earlier than called for in the law. States would have the option to opt out of various requirements *if* they can still cover as many people, meet minimum benefit requirements, and not increase the federal deficit.

~ More News Items ~

- [Poll Shows Budget-Cuts Dilemma](#) (Wall Street Journal)
- [Vermont Governor Sets Out to Lead U.S. to True Universal Coverage](#) (Huffington Post)
- [Bipartisan Senate duo wants Medicare to make payments to doctors public](#) (The Hill)
- [Mr. Obama's Health Care Challenge](#) (NY Times)
- [Ariz. Medicaid Cuts Spur Debate Over Impact On Providers](#) (Kaiser Health News)
- [The State of Health Policy Education in U.S. Medical Schools](#) (NEJM)