



The Counties that Need the Affordable Care Act the Most

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July 2013

Introduction and summary

Millions of Americans who are unable to afford health care will finally be able to get the health insurance they need to take care of themselves and their families when the Affordable Care Act goes into effect next year. But conservatives in Congress have been fighting tooth and nail to dismantle and destroy the health care law and prevent the American people from even learning about the benefits of the law or their new insurance options.

From warning the professional sports leagues¹ not to assist in spreading the word about the health care law, to the House voting 40 times to repeal the law, to denying funding for the government to educate consumers about the benefits of the law or enrollment, conservative lawmakers not only have refused to work on strengthening the law but are doing everything they can to torpedo it. Many of these opponents of the health care law represent districts with some of the highest rates of uninsured people in the nation. These elected officials have abandoned their responsibility to assist constituents and refuse to recognize that their constituents include the uninsured and families who will benefit immensely when the health care marketplaces go into effect in January 2014. In contrast, though Democrats had fought against the passage of President George W. Bush's Medicare Part D drug benefit, Democrats did not try to undermine the law's implementation and, in fact, undertook to educate their constituents on how to navigate the law.²

It is one thing to fight the passage of the health care law, but as Norm Ornstein at the American Enterprise Institute wrote, "What is going on now to sabotage Obamacare is not treasonous—just sharply beneath any reasonable standards of elected officials with the fiduciary responsibility of governing."³

But it is not just conservatives in Congress who⁴ are blocking their constituents from accessing the benefits of the health care law. Governors and state legislatures in states across the country are refusing to expand Medicaid. If every governor accepted the federal funds guaranteed under the health care law to expand Medicaid, nearly 17 million Americans would gain coverage.⁵ But after

the Supreme Court's decision to allow states to decide whether to accept funding, conservative legislatures and governors in 13 states decided not to expand Medicaid coverage in their state, leaving millions of Americans without access to affordable health insurance.⁶ Another six states are leaning against expansion.⁷ These governors and state legislatures are not only denying care to those who need it the most, but they are also costing their states tens of millions of dollars.

Yes, politicians can play their games, but at the end of the day, it's their job to fight for the best interests of all their constituents, including the uninsured. To do anything less is an abdication of their constitutional duty.

In just a few short months—in January 2014—millions of uninsured Americans will finally have access to the affordable health care that they and their families need to live healthy and secure lives. This report takes an in-depth look at some of the counties that may stand to gain the most from full implementation of the health care law. A number of these counties are represented by congressional members who, instead of helping those in their districts learn more about the law and how to access the law's benefits, are actually working against what is best for their constituents.

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