

### **Talking Points: Americans Will See Immediate Benefits As a Result of Health Reform**

- The legislation passed last night is a victory for American families, for seniors, for workers and small businesses – for Americans who deserve the security of knowing that in this country, neither illness nor accident should endanger the American dream.
- The legislation passed last night brings down health care costs for American families and small businesses, expands coverage to millions of Americans and ends the worst practices of insurance companies. And it begins to do so this year.
- As a result of this bill, Americans will begin to see significant benefits take effect this year, with other important reforms following shortly after.

### **This bill will immediately begin to lower health care costs for American families and small businesses.**

- In 2010, small businesses that choose to offer coverage will begin to receive tax credits of up to 35 percent of premiums to help make employee coverage more affordable.
- In 2010, adults who are uninsured because of pre-existing conditions will have access to affordable insurance through a temporary high-risk pool.
- This bill starts to close the Medicare Part D donut hole in 2010 by providing a \$250 rebate to Medicare beneficiaries who hit the gap in prescription drug coverage. And beginning in 2011, the bill institutes a 50% discount on [prescription](#) drugs in the donut hole.
- Starting this year, new private plans will be required to provide free preventive care: no co-payments and no deductibles for preventive services. And beginning January 1, 2011, Medicare will do the same.
- In 2010, this bill will provide help for early retirees by creating a temporary re-insurance program to help offset the costs of expensive premiums for employers and retirees age 55-64.

### **Under health reform, Americans will see an immediate expansion of coverage.**

- This year, children with pre-existing conditions can no longer be denied health insurance coverage. The bill outlaws that practice for new health plans as well as grandfathered group plans. Moving forward, no insurance company can deny a child coverage based on his or her health.
- This year, new health care plans and select grandfathered plans will allow young people to remain on their parents' insurance policy up until their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- This year, insurance companies will be banned from dropping people from coverage when they get sick, and they will be banned from implementing lifetime caps on coverage. This year, restrictive annual limits on coverage will be banned for new plans and grandfathered group health plans. Under health reform, Americans will be ensured access to the care they need.
- The bill increases funding for community health centers so that nearly double the number of patients can be treated in their community health centers over the next 5 years. The

funding begins in the next fiscal year.

- The health reform bill will increase the number of primary care doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and physician assistants through new investments. This funding takes effect in the next fiscal year.

**Health reform will immediately curb some of the worst insurance industry practices and strengthen consumer protections.**

- Beginning this year, this bill creates a new, independent appeals process that ensures consumers in new private plans have access to an effective process to appeal decisions made by their insurer.
- Starting January 1, 2011, insurers in the individual and small group market will be required to spend 80 percent of their premium dollars on medical services. Insurers in the large group market will be required to spend 85 percent of their premium dollars on medical services. Any insurers who don't meet those thresholds will be required to provide rebates to their policyholders.
- This year, discrimination based on salary will be outlawed. New group health plans will be prohibited from establishing any eligibility rules for health care coverage that discriminate in favor of higher-wage employees.
- This bill holds insurance companies accountable for unreasonable rate hikes. Starting in 2011, it helps states require insurance companies to submit justification for all requested premium increases. Any company with excessive or unjustified premium increases may not be able to participate in the new health insurance exchanges.
- Beginning this fiscal year, this bill provides funding to states to help establish offices of health insurance consumer assistance in order to help individuals in the process of filing complaints or appeals against insurance companies.