

What Healthcare Reform Means for Us

Many of us are wondering how the healthcare reforms signed into law earlier this week will impact us. It's important to know that nothing in the bill changes our right to negotiate our healthcare benefits.

Key Healthcare Reform Benefits Starting THIS YEAR Include:

- Ending lifetime limits on benefits.
- Regulating annual limits on benefits from 2010-2013 (abolishing them in 2014).
- Allowing young adults to stay on their parents' insurance plan up to age 26.
- Banning the insurance company practice of denying coverage for pre-existing conditions for children. The ban applies to everyone in 2014 and provides a subsidized high-risk pool in the meantime for those unable to secure coverage.
- Ending gender discrimination in insurance rates.
- Stopping the insurance company tactic of dropping coverage for people who get sick.

Benefits for Retirees – Including Early Retirees – Include:

- Assisting pre-Medicare retirees with insurance costs. Under the new law, 80 percent of plan costs over \$15,000 will be paid through a new program.
- Providing assistance to employers and Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Associations (VEBAs) to encourage them to continue coverage for pre-Medicare retirees.
- Phasing out the Medicare drug "doughnut hole."
- Eliminating co-pays for preventative screenings.
- Extending the life of the Medicare Trust Fund through cuts in wasteful spending.

Other Benefits –

With 95 percent of Americans expected to have health insurance coverage under the new law, we can anticipate less cost-shifting of the uninsured's healthcare expenses onto those of us who have insurance. Cost containment strategies along with other provisions in the bill should help control premium increases from year-to-year. This will ultimately help us at the bargaining table.

In the event that a job is lost, there will now be affordable, quality options for coverage.

Because of our work in opposing the excise tax, we were able to substantially alter its impact on high-cost insurance plans. There will be no tax until 2018. When that goes into effect, a variety of modifications and exemptions will lessen any impact.