

Make Your Voice Heard on Federal Healthcare Reform

Tell Your Senators "No" on Employer "Pay or Play" Mandates and "Yes" on Affordable Health Care!

A key Senate committee is expected to consider a health care employer mandate this week as the federal health care reform debate officially gets under way. Please contact Senators Webb and Warner immediately and urge them to strongly oppose employer mandate requirements on restaurants, including a rumored "pay or play" proposal that we expect to be offered in committee. VHTA and our federal associations support comprehensive health care reform and is committed to increasing accessibility and affordability. However, employer requirements would pose a significant financial burden on restaurants, franchisees and other small businesses. Under "pay or play", an employer would be required to either pay an undetermined penalty ("pay"), or provide health insurance to all employees ("play") at a level determined by the government.

The Senate HELP Committee is expected to begin consideration of Senator Ted Kennedy's "Affordable Health Choices Act" as early as this Tuesday, and we need you to contact your Senators today. Another committee, the Senate Finance Committee is also expected to act starting next week. Under a very aggressive timeline, assuming legislation is approved by both committees, a health care bill could be on the Senate floor the week after July 4th. The House is expected to try and move their bill starting in July.

No specific details are available on the employer "pay or play" provision, or a provision that would create a government health care plan option, similar to Medicare. The 600-page bill released last week did not include these two provisions. We fully anticipate the details to emerge this week in committee, but we need you to engage now.

It is very important that all Senators are contacted. However, if your Senator is on the HELP Committee or Finance Committee, it is particularly important!

Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Members:

Edward Kennedy (D-MA)	Michael B. Enzi (R-WY)
Christopher Dodd (D-CT)	Judd Gregg (R-NH)
Tom Harkin (D-IA)	Lamar Alexander (R-TN)
Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD)	Richard Burr (R-NC)
Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)	Johnny Isakson (R-GA)
Patty Murray (D-WA)	John McCain (R-AZ)
Jack Reed (D-RI)	Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT)
Bernard Sanders (I) (VT)	Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
Sherrrod Brown (D-OH)	Tom Coburn, M.D. (R-OK)
Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-PA)	Pat Roberts (R-KS)
Kay Hagan (D-NC)	Jeff Merkley (D-OR)

Senate Finance Committee Members:

Max Baucus (D-MT)	Chuck Grassley (R-IA)
John D. Rockefeller IV (D-WV)	Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT)
Kent Conrad (D-ND)	Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME)
Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)	Jon Kyl (R-AZ)
John F. Kerry (D-MA)	Jim Bunning (R-KY)
Blanche L. Lincoln (D-AR)	Mike Crapo (R-ID)
Ron Wyden (D-OR)	Pat Roberts (R-KS)
Charles E. Schumer (D-NY)	John Ensign (R-NV)
Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)	Mike Enzi (R-WY)

Maria Cantwell (D-WA)
Bill Nelson (D-FL)
Thomas Carper (D-DE)

John Cornyn (R-TX)
Robert Menendez (D-NJ)

HOW YOU CAN HELP!

Contact Senators Webb and Warner today!

Senator Jim Webb's Contact Information:

Online comments: <http://webb.senate.gov/contact/>

Phone: (202) 224-4024

Senator Mark Warner's Contact Information :

Online comments: <http://warner.senate.gov/contact/contact.cfm>

Phone: (202) 224-2023

As always, let us know what actions you have taken and we can thank you for your efforts!

Use the points below when you call the Senators:

An employer "pay or play" requirement would threaten the jobs of the very people the requirement is intended to help, and does nothing to address the cost hurdles facing smaller employers. A recent study conducted by NFIB indicates that an employer requirement would cost our economy 1.6 million jobs. And the Employment Policy Institute estimates that this type of requirement would result in 995,000 lost jobs and a reduction in wages by \$71 billion. Instead of an employer requirement, Congress should enact reforms that expand the number of affordable choices available to employers and their employees.

Employer mandates and one-size-fits-all coverage does not provide the flexibility that employers need to design benefits to workforce needs and thus provides a disincentive for responsible spending and health insurance cost containment.

A government health care plan threatens the future existence of the few private market options available to my business today. The existing market needs more choices not less. The potential inability of existing insurers to compete with a tax-payer funded government health plan threatens the stability of the private market.

The industry believes that reform should make health care more accessible by facilitating voluntary, multi-state health-insurance purchasing pools; making it easier for businesses and individuals to participate in health savings accounts and flexible spending accounts; increasing tax incentives for employers, employees and non-employees to purchase health care; and encouraging greater use of wellness and chronic care management programs.