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Governor
Deval Patrick

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GOVERNOR PATRICK JOINS U.S. SURGEON GENERAL TO HIGHLIGHT SUCCESSSES OF PRESIDENT OBAMA'S HEALTH CARE REFORM



Governor Patrick joins U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin at Northeastern University to celebrate the successes of the Affordable Care Act and promote healthy living. (Photo credit: Eric Haynes / Governor's Office). View additional [photos](#).

BOSTON – Wednesday, March 21, 2012 – Governor Deval Patrick today joined U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin at Northeastern University to highlight the successes of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) two years after President Obama signed the historic legislation into law. Because of the law, an estimated 32 million Americans will be able to afford health insurance for the first time.

"Just like our own health care reforms here in Massachusetts, the Affordable Care Act is a values statement," said Governor Patrick. "Thanks to President Obama, Surgeon General Benjamin and the entire Obama Administration, every American in every corner of the country has the security of knowing affordable health care will be there when they need it."

When fully implemented, the ACA will end the worst insurance company abuses – including denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions or canceling coverage when someone gets sick. The ACA requires insurance companies to cover preventative care like mammograms and other cancer screenings. Already, 20 million women with private health insurance have received preventative health services such as mammograms and pap smears at no additional cost because of health care reform.

The ACA is also supporting small businesses. More than 4 million small businesses are now eligible for a tax credit to help pay for health care premiums. The credit will increase to cover 50 percent of premiums in 2014. Under the new law, help for small businesses – including the new insurance exchanges – will reduce small business health care costs by approximately 9 percent.

The new health care law is already making a difference and producing results across the nation:

- 2.5 million additional young adults have health insurance from their parents plan.
- Last year, 3.6 million seniors with Medicare saved an average of \$600 on the cost of prescription drugs. Everyone on Medicare is eligible to receive preventive services like mammograms for free.
- Insurance companies must spend at least 80 percent of premium payments on health care and not overhead and cannot raise premiums by 10 percent or more without accountability.
- It's now illegal for insurance companies to deny coverage to children because of a pre-existing condition. And in 2014, discriminating against anyone with a pre-existing condition will be illegal.

Today's "Community Partners in Prevention" forum at Northeastern marked the first in a series of events Dr. Benjamin will attend in Massachusetts over the next three days. She is joined by members of President Obama's National Prevention Council, a group of 17 federal department secretaries and directors. Dr. Benjamin chairs the council, which was established by President Obama in June 2010 to develop a national prevention strategy. The council is dedicated to improving health and wellness nationally. The national prevention strategy is part of the ACA and aims to accomplish this goal by taking a multi-sectoral look at public health, while assessing the various factors that influence health and wellness including: housing, education, transportation, environment, access to quality, affordable food and drug and alcohol abuse.

"Since the implementation of health care reform, we have made great strides in the Commonwealth to address chronic disease and significantly reduce the number of hospitalizations," said Massachusetts Secretary of Health and Human Services Dr. JudyAnn Bigby. "We know that helping people lead healthier lives also saves taxpayer dollars and the principles of President Obama's prevention strategy are ones that we have prioritized as part of health care cost containment."

In 2006, Governor Mitt Romney signed Massachusetts health care reform into law, and since then the Patrick-Murray Administration has worked to implement it successfully. Today, over 98 percent of Massachusetts residents are covered, with 99.8 percent of children covered and 99.6 percent of seniors. Health care has added less than 1 percent to state spending and access has increased significantly with over 90 percent of individuals having primary care providers.

The next step is controlling costs. Governor Patrick has proposed comprehensive health care payment and delivery and reform legislation to control rising health care costs and improve patient care. Governor Patrick called on the Massachusetts Legislature to make cost-containment a priority. Cost control is a national issue right now, but the Patrick-Murray Administration is leading the nation in getting results. In Massachusetts, premium increases have decreased from 16.3 percent in the second quarter of 2010 to 1.8 percent in the second quarter of 2012. In January 2012, the Division of Insurance approved two group purchasing cooperatives, which will allow small businesses and individuals to combine market power and seek out lower rates. One cooperative has already found a carrier plan that will offer rates 20 percent lower than what the members could find on the open market. Through the 2010 Economic Development Act, limited network plans have been implemented that are saving consumers 12 percent compared to regular plans.

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