

Lighting The Road To The Future

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New Orleans

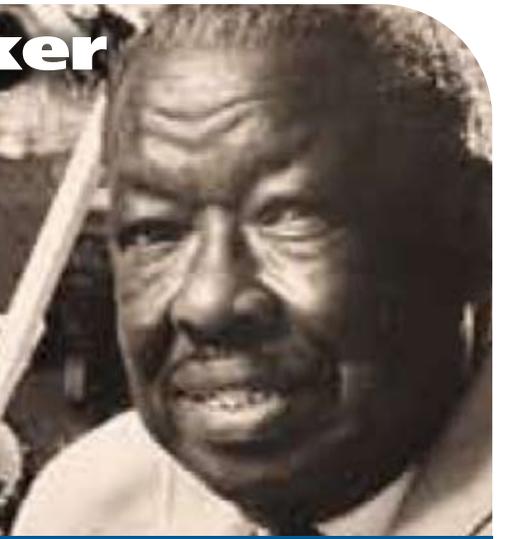
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March 27 - April 2, 2010 44th Year Volume 26 www.ladatanews.com

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Its The Law!

Health Care Finally Passes: What Will it Mean for Black People?



Story by Hazel Trice Edney
Editor & Chief NNPA
& Cheryl Mainor
Managing Editor, Data News Weekly

Special Section by: Cheryl Mainor
Managing Editor, Data News Weekly

It finally passed. The health care bill for which President Barack Obama has vehemently fought almost since Day One at the White House has finally passed both houses of Congress and was headed to his desk for his signature this week.

As Congressional Black Caucus Members celebrated the 219-212 vote, the President put the historic moment in perspective on Sunday evening:

“Tonight, after nearly 100 years of talk and frustration, after decades of trying, and a year of sustained effort and debate, the United States Congress finally declared that America’s workers and America’s families and America’s small businesses deserve the security of knowing that here, in this country, neither illness nor accident should endanger the dreams they’ve worked a lifetime to achieve.”

He explained, “If you have health insurance, this reform just gave you more control by reining in the worst excesses and abuses of the insurance industry with some of the toughest consumer protections this country has ever known - so that you are actually getting what you pay for.

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Please call (504) 309-9913 for subscription information. Dated material two weeks in advance. Not responsible for publishing or return of unsolicited manuscripts or photos.

Cover Story, Continued from previous page.

"If you don't have insurance, this reform gives you a chance to be a part of a big purchasing pool that will give you choice and competition and cheaper prices for insurance. And it includes the largest health care tax cut for working families and small busi-

nesses in history - so that if you lose your job and you change jobs, start that new business, you'll finally be able to purchase quality, affordable care and the security and peace of mind that comes with it.

President Obama has fought long for the bill, escalating the battle after the death of his friend and former colleague Sen. Ted Kennedy last year. Kennedy was considered the Sen-

ate's champion for health care. The bill passed the Senate on Christmas Eve. Still, many will now wonder what it all means for African-Americans who suffer the most from low quality health care and health disparities. Members of the CBC say they believe the bill will make significant impact in the Black community.

"We cast our votes for all those people who deserve health care but simply can't afford it. We cast our votes for our senior citizens who will see their prescription drug costs go down. We cast our

preventive care and died prematurely," said a statement from Congressional Black Caucus Chair Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), applauding the passage. "We were vocal advocates for provisions in the bill to combat health disparities, illnesses and diseases that disproportionately affect our community. To those who suffer from those health disparities, our vote tonight carries significance similar to the passage of the

other key provisions in the legislation that CBC members fought to have included are:

- Expanded support for community health centers, which play a vital role in expanding access to preventive and other care in our nation's most vulnerable communities.
- Greater support for programs that will increase the racial and ethnic diversity in the nation's health workforce, as well as im-



nesses in history - so that if you lose your job and you change

Still, many will now wonder

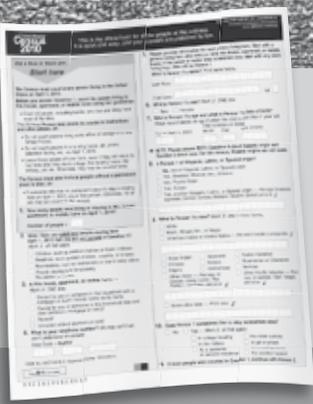
votes for our children and grandchildren, so that they can live longer, fuller and healthier lives. We cast our votes in the memory of those people who didn't have

Civil Rights Act in that it fulfills a dream that has been elusive for far too long and for far too many Americans."

According to a CBC document,

proved data collection so that we can better measure health inequities and develop solutions to end all health disparities.

Continued page 10.



YES! By taking just 10 minutes to answer 10 simple questions, you can help improve education, public transportation, and healthcare in our community. Help ensure these improvements happen. Fill out and mail back your Census form today. Responses are confidential and will not be shared with third parties, including immigration or law enforcement.

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Census
2010

IT'S IN OUR HANDS

Data News Founder Joseph M. Scoop Jones Honored As Distinguished Black Publisher

by Hazel Trice Edney
Editor & Chief NNPA

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - When Cleretta Thomas-Blackman was growing up, she observed the grueling nature of her parents' newspaper business and vowed that she would never undertake such pressures. Her mother, Mrs. Lancia M. Thomas, would work all day as a school teacher; then come home and help her father with the paper until 2 o'clock in the morning.

But, that's not all.

"I saw the paper go through so much racial unrest. The bombing and the threats that came to our office all the time made me fear newspaper publishing. So, I went away and I had a career of my own," she recalled last week at a luncheon to honor her now late mother, who was co-founder and publisher of the Mobile Beacon in Alabama. "And before he died I promised him that I would one day come back to the paper. And that's what I did. Before my mother passed, I said, 'I will come home and help you with the paper'. I worked harder than I have ever worked in my life. I made less money than I had ever made. But, I would not take anything for it."



Mr. Terry Jones, far right, stands with NNPA Foundation Chair Dorothy R. Leavell, who honored his father, Joseph Madison "Scoop" Jones, Jr., as a "Distinguished Black Publisher". Jones, publisher of the New Orleans Data News Weekly, allows his son, Glenn, to hold the plaque. Also pictured are Dr. Clarence Muse, Howard University archivist, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and NNPA Chairman Danny Bakewell Sr.

Just the opposite from Thomas-Blackman, Terry Jones was enthusiastic from the very beginning. He watched his father, Joseph Madison "Scoop" Jones, Jr., so absorbed into the newspaper business with his Data News Weekly that after attending NNPA

conventions with him as a youngster, when he finally took over the paper, he "wanted to be a part of everything" - from the conventions to the board.

The two were speaking about their parents during the annual enshrinement ceremony at the Gallery of Distinguished Black Publishers at Howard University March 19.

During the annual luncheon at Howard University - officiated by NNPA Foundation Chair Dorothy R. Leavell - Jones described his father, who went from a 9-year-old newspaper delivery boy to a war correspondent, as having "journalism in his blood" even during the days of segregation. But, like his father, he too had to overcome tremendous odds. When Jones' paper was destroyed in Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Jones spent the next three years publishing the New Orleans Data News Weekly from the city of

Atlanta.

Thomas-Blackman and Terry Jones, both children of the now deceased member publishers of

Jones, Jr. was a writer, photographer and founder of the now 43-year-old Data News Weekly. He served the Associated Negro Press as a war correspondent, becoming known as the first Black war correspondent in the Southwest Pacific. He earned his nickname, "Scoop", after he was the first photo-journalist on the scene of a Natchez, Miss. Dance-hall fire that killed 209 people. He died in 1998 at the age of 81.

The Mobile Beacon, co-published by Mrs. Black-Thomas, is Alabama's oldest Black newspaper, the Mobile Beacon, founded in 1943. She turned the reins over to her daughter in 1994 after becoming ill. Still she worked as long as she could until she died May 2, 2005. Black-Thomas, also a voter registration activist, helped her husband build three newspapers, the Alabama Citizen in Tuscaloosa, the Selma Citizen and the Mobile Beacon. Mrs. Black-Thomas was not only esteemed for her teaching and journalism; she was well known for her community activism, receiving guber-



Mrs. Cleretta Thomas-Blackman, receives a plaque in honor of her mother, Mrs. Lancia M. Thomas, enshrined into the Gallery of Distinguished Black Publishers. She is flanked by NNPA Chairman Danny Bakewell, NNPAF Chair Dorothy R. Leavell and Dr. Clarence Muse, Howard University archivist, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.

the 70-year-old National Newspaper Publishers Association, recalled their journeys into the business as they honored their heroic parents during the annual enshrinement ceremony.

The luncheon, at Howard's Blackburn Center, is the crowning conclusion of Black Press Week, the annual celebration of the founding of the first Black newspaper, Freedom's Journal, on March 16, 1827. Joseph Madison "Scoop" Jones, Jr. and Mrs. Lancia M. Thomas were this year's honorees.

natorial appointments and was highly respected for her work in the Presbytery of South Alabama. Her late husband was enshrined in the Gallery 22 years ago.

"This is such a rewarding ceremony," said Leavell. She officiated the enshrinements alongside NNPA Chairman Danny Bakewell.

She concluded, "Every time we do the enshrinement, we get an opportunity to learn about people. We didn't know the stories, we didn't know all the sacrifices. We didn't know the struggles."

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Drink Well. Do Good

International Society of Africans In Wine



Dionne Character, Author
Entertainment Editor & Columnist

On Monday, March 22, 2010, many gathered at the Southern Food & Beverage Museum in the Riverwalk, to join Executive Director, Stephen Satterfield in a wine tasting hosted by the International Society of Africans In Wine. The tasting involved wines which represent the men and women reshaping the South African wine industry.

Drink Well Do Good, is a grassroots production made possible by community leaders, nonprofits, universities, volunteers, and corporate partners, all working in tandem to produce a remarkable

outcome to raise \$150,000.

These funds will help to develop a training center for South African vintners, with the hopes of building a school for the M'Hudi wine estate in Stellenbosch, which will allow South Africans to learn the techniques of producing their own wines and raising the South African economy as a whole.

Some of the wines introduced were Seven Sisters Chenin Blanc, Seven Sisters Odelia Buketraube, Seven Sisters Pinotage/Shiraz and M'hudi Pinotage, all designed to excite the palate.

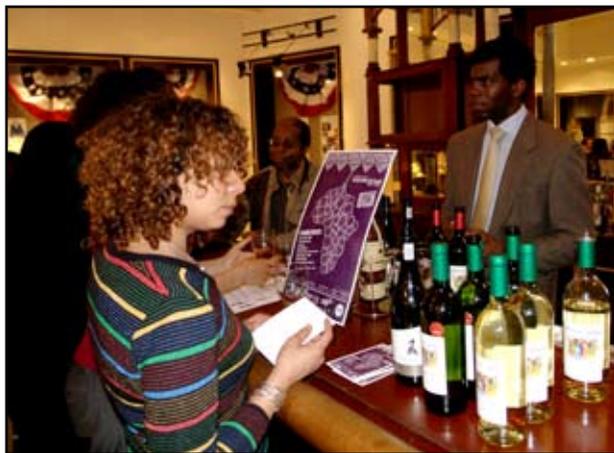
If you are interested in joining the Cape Collections Wine Club to make a contribution in exchange for a great taste, do some good and please visit www.isawfoundation.org.

A Do Good Benefit Concert will be held at Cafe' Prytania featuring Kora Konnection on April 3, 2010 at 8PM and on April 4, 2010, a Drink Well Exhibition will be held from 3-7 at Southern Food & Beverage Museum. Tickets are \$80.

Dionne Character can be reached at dasolediva@yahoo.com

International Society of Africans in Wine Wine Tasting Event

Photos by Glenn Summers





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Health Care: Finally a Semblance of Justice



Rev. Al Sharpton
NNPA Columnist

thank you for representing our needs and thank you for representing the will of the people.

For decades, Presidents have tried and failed to push through health care legislation that would begin to rectify the unfair practices of health care providers and the egregious monopoly of the insurance industry. There were efforts by Harry Truman after the Second World War, a push by Lyndon B. Johnson and who can forget the unyielding work of Bill and Hillary Clinton in the 1990s. But it wasn't until Sunday, into the late hours of the night, that the U.S. Congress effectively passed this historic health care legislation. Following a year of fierce debate and town hall meetings that ended in shouting matches, the Democrats and President Obama solidified their pledge that change would indeed come to Washington.

No one can deny that the road to health care reform was embedded with hurdles and difficulties beyond comprehension. Nor is anyone avowing that all problems within our health care system will be immediately resolved. But for the first time in our nation's history, American children cannot be denied coverage because they have pre-existing conditions, small businesses will receive a tax credit for provid-

ing health care, young adults can stay on their parent's insurance until the age of 27 and insurance companies cannot cut someone when he or she gets sick. And by 2014, annual caps will be eliminated, health care exchanges will be available, adults with pre-existing conditions will no longer be discriminated against and much more. Let us not forget, all progressive legislation – including the Voting Rights Act of 1965 – did not grant everything all at once. Instead, it was amendments and other additions to the initial law that created the equality we know and enjoy today. This health care reform bill therefore is the first step in finally achieving a semblance of justice in an area that has shocked and outraged everyone concerned with the betterment of humanity.

President Obama clearly outlined his plan for health care overhaul early on during his campaign for the Presidency. And after winning the election, he spent the first year in office not only fighting for this legislation, but also reaching across the aisle. Incorporating both Democratic and Republican concepts into this bill, and making changes along the way, the President allowed an open exchange of ideas that ultimately delayed a vote on health care reform for an entire year. Let's be blatantly clear

about one thing: Republicans influenced many alterations to this bill – including the loss of a public option – and yet not a single one of them voted in favor of it this past weekend. As we approach the mid-term elections and other battles in key states, let us never ever forget this fact.

Not since the 1960s has such historic legislation passed the Congress and appeared before the President's desk. But also not since that era have we witnessed such open vitriol, bigotry and reprehensible behavior. The idea that members of Congress had racial epithets like the 'N word' hurled at them, and others were spat at only proves the fact that we are unfortunately a long way from even being close to a post-racial society. And to those pundits and voices on the right that stoke this sort of behavior, you will only lose in the end. You doubted President Obama and the Democrats – they delivered. You created hysteria surrounding health care reform all across the country – it passed on Sunday. And you continue to incite division and racial disparity – and the people will continue voting in the way of progress. Yes we can, and yes we will.

It was the second annual convention of the Medical Committee for Human Rights in 1965. And during this conference in Chicago, our great civil rights leader, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., delivered a speech that till this day resonates with those who see disparity in our health care system. It was on March 25 – precisely 44 years ago - that MLK said: "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman." To the 220 members of Congress who voted yes for health care reform on Sunday, the citizens of the United States at long last say thank you for representing our desires,

March Madness on Capitol Hill



George C. Curry
NNPA

who was arrested by Capitol Hill police.

According to the McClatchey News Service, one colleague walking with Lewis to the Capitol heard the chants of, "Kill the bill, kill the bill." When Lewis told some protesters that he supported the health care measure being voted on in the House, marchers taunted him, saying: "Kill the bill, nigger." One Black lawmaker said he heard the n-word 15 times.

"They were shouting, sort of harassing," Lewis told the wire service. "But it's OK. I've faced this before. It reminded me of the '60s. It was a lot of downright hate and anger and people being downright mean."

Cleaver experienced that meanness when a protester spat on him.

"This is not the first time the congressman has been called the n-word and certainly not the worst assault he has endured in his years fighting for equal rights for all Americans," a statement from Cleaver's office said. "That being said, he is disappointed that in the 21st century our national discourse has devolved to the point of name calling and spitting."

Cleaver, an ordained minister, former mayor of Kansas City and ex-organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), refused to press charges against his abuser.

Some of these lunatics are out of control. Can you imagine the national reaction if an African-American protester spat on a White member of Congress in public and called him or her a racial epithet? Michael Steele, Chairman of the Republican National Committee, and several GOP leaders in the House have denounced the abhorrent actions on Saturday, but were quick to characterize them as "isolated incidents."

The venom was not isolated to African-American lawmakers.

Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), an openly gay member of Congress, was called a "homo" and a "faggot."

He told the Boston Globe, "I was, I guess, surprised by the rancor. What it means is obviously the health care bill is proxy for a lot of other sentiments, some of which are perfectly reasonable, but some of which are not."

Frank added, "People out there today, on the whole, were really hateful. The leaders of this movement have a responsibility to speak out more."

But the rancor was not limited to a few "isolated incidents" outside the Capitol.

Democratic Rep. Bart Stupak of Michigan threatened to vote against the health care bill until President Obama agreed to issue an executive order maintaining

the current federal ban on the use of federal funds for abortions except in the case of rape, incest or when a mother's life is threatened.

When Stupak urged Democrats to reject a Republican anti-abortion amendment, someone from the Republican aisle yelled, "Baby killer."

John Campbell, a Republican from California, acknowledged that the person yelling the comment sat in the row behind him, where Texas Republicans usually sit.

"The people who know won't give it up," Campbell told reporters.

The March Madness over the newly signed health care law will probably carry over into the November elections as Democrats and Republicans seek to prove that they reflect the position of most Americans.

The 178 House Republicans unanimously voted against the health care measure, which passed 219-212. On the Democratic side, 34 voted no, including five who supported health care reform when the House first passed it on Nov. 7.

Obama has launched a series of high-profile events around the country to increase support for the legislation. Meanwhile, Republicans plan to continue using the newly-

March Madness, the frantic round of tournament showdowns to determine which team will emerge as the top college basketball unit in the nation, has nothing on the Capitol Hill Madness that occurred over the weekend.

Outside the domed deliberations over health care Saturday, so-called Tea Party protesters shouted the n-word at several African-American congressmen, including John Lewis who was brutally beaten in Selma, Ala. as part of the Selma to Montgomery March that led to the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Another Black representative, Emanuel Cleaver II of Kansas City, Mo., was spat on by one protester,

Making Yourself Count

The 2010 Census Arrives

by Cheryl Mainor

When you think of the Census, think about your slice of the American Pie. If you do the math, it's easy to see what an accurate count of New Orleans residents can do for our community. Better infrastructure, more services, more funding for rebuilding our city, and how more than \$400 billion dollars of federal funding will be spent on much needed things like new hospitals, job training centers, public schools and more. The shortest form in history, filling out the census form just makes good sense.

Despite being one of the shortest forms in American history, comprised of only 10 questions that take about ten minutes or less to answer, completing the 2010 Census, particularly in underserved communities, could never be more important especially during tough economic times, said Marc Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League.

Not only will it help determine the distribution of more than \$400 billion in funds to local, state and tribal governments, but "a com-



Census

plete and accurate census count will ensure that your state and community get their fair share of Congressional seats and community services," said Morial, who views it as "an essential tool of economic and political empowerment."

The form is being delivered now to all U.S. households and is supported by individuals determined to account for every resident in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Through ad campaigns and community partnerships, the Census

Bureau is trying to reach generally undercounted populations, largely Black and Hispanic.

It is particularly important for residents of New Orleans and the other areas affected by Hurricane Katrina so that an accurate count of those who are currently residing in the rebuilding areas can be determined so that the appropriate portion of the more than \$400 billion in federal funds can be distributed each year based in part on census population data

Things to keep in mind when

you receive your Census form in the mail are:

10 Minutes of your time

It takes just 10 minutes for the average household to complete 10 simple questions. The census form is one of the shortest in history, asking households to provide the names of residents and their sex, age and date of birth, race, whether of Hispanic origin, relationship to householder, whether the home is owned or rented and telephone number.

*Note that the form does not ask about citizenship or legal status, or for anyone's Social Security number.

Do it the easy way

47.8 million is the projected number of housing units that will fail to respond to the census by mail and will require a census taker to follow up in person to count the household. Receiving census forms by mail is much less expensive and saves taxpayers approximately \$85 million for every percentage point increase in the national mail participation rate.

Everyone Counts

Service locations, such as

emergency/transitional shelters, soup kitchens, regularly scheduled mobile food vans and targeted non-sheltered outdoor locations, where people experiencing homelessness will be counted March 29 - 31.

Speak your Language

Questionnaires are available in: English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian and Vietnamese. (Translated questionnaires are available only upon request)

Age Counts

15 is the minimum age a household member must be in order to fill out the census questionnaire so if you have to have help filling out the form, make sure the person filling it out is 15 years old or over.

Census Day is April 1, 2010

Since 1930, Census Day has been April 1. Census Day is not the deadline for mailing back the questionnaire. The Census hopes that people will mail the questionnaire soon after they receive it and not wait for Census Day. Census Day is simply the reference date we set for people to report their household information

New Orleans College Prep Wins National Award for Student Achievement

NOCP was selected as one of 22 out of 179 high-need schools nation-wide to be recognized and honored by New Leaders for New Schools' Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) program for its significant student achievement gain on the iLEAP Louisiana state achievement tests in 2008-09. NOCP was the only school in Louisiana selected for the recognition. Educators at the school will receive individual financial rewards and will document and share the practices that led to the award winning gains with New Leaders for New Schools so that they can be replicated across the nation.

EPIC is primarily funded by the federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant which will be releasing a new round of funding in the spring. Additional information on the EPIC program can be found at www.nlms.org/epic.

School leaders at EPIC-winning schools will receive awards ranging from \$8,000 to \$12,000 while all teachers at each school will receive awards ranging from \$3000 to \$4000.

Award-Winning Scores

Despite the fact that the school has doubled in size each year since its inception in 2007, their students' performance on state tests has been remarkable—in 2009, the percentage of NOCP students scoring proficient on state exams increased by an average of 17% across all subjects. NOCP 7th graders met the state average in Math and Social Studies and its 6th graders were just 1% shy of the state average in Math.

For more detailed information on 2009 6th and 7th grade iLEAP test scores, please visit www.nola-collegeprep.org.

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation presents the Third Annual Sync Up Conference

April 23-24 and April 30-May 1
At the New Orleans Museum of Art

David Simon, co-creator of the new HBO series "Treme," will give a keynote address at the Third Annual Sync Up conference, which takes place during the 2010 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival presented by Shell.

The Sync Up conference – one of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation's economic development programs for the Louisiana entertainment industry – brings together top leaders from the international music festival industry as well as key figures in the worlds of film, television, videogames, social networking and other new media.

As in past years, the conference will consist of networking sessions and panel discussions the mornings of the Friday and Saturday of both Jazz Fest weekends (April 23-24 and April 30-May 1).

This year, the conference moves to a new location – the elegant New Orleans Museum of Art which is walking distance to Jazz Fest.

Topics to be discussed include the international music festivals market, licensing music to film and television, songwriting and using the Internet to market and sell music.

Admission to the Sync Up conference is free, but seating is limited, so advance registration is required.

Sync Up conference participants will have even more reason to enjoy Jazz Fest. Conference attendees will have exclusive access to a Sync Up Hospitality Area at the Fair Grounds, a cool oasis to refresh and continue conversations begun at the conference.

Sync Up is presented by the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and Foundation, Inc., and is co-sponsored by Louisiana Economic Development, The Recording Academy®, the Guild of Music Supervisors, Creative Control Entertainment, OffBeat, AudioSocket and the New Orleans Museum of Art.

Despite Broad Approval from Constituents, Cao Votes No On Health Care

By Cheryl Mainor

New Orleans Congressman Anh "Joseph" Cao (LA-2) reversed his Christmas Eve yes vote on the House Bill and voted "no" on the Senate health care reform bill, warning the legislation could lead to the greatest expansion of federal funding of abortion in U.S. history.

Despite the assurances from President Obama, Cao opposed the Senate's health care reform bill, casting a "no" vote for the Motion to Concur in the Senate Amendments to H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Cao, who was the sole Republican to vote in favor of the House health care reform bill (H.R. 3962), said he could not in good conscience vote for the Senate version because the measure and a related presidential Executive Order are together and individu-



Congressman Anh "Joseph" Cao (LA-2)

ally "insufficient to protect against expanded federal funding of abortion."

In a letter to President Obama explaining his vote, Cao wrote: "To me, a moral ethicist and a former Jesuit seminarian, and to literally tens of thousands of the Louisianans I represent, the Sen-

ate abortion language is dangerously insufficient."

Cao noted he voted in favor of the House health care reform bill only after the House adopted the Stupak-Pitts Amendment, applying the 1976 Hyde Amendment, which upholds federal law banning federal funding of abortion except in case of rape, incest, or danger to the life of the mother. Congressman Supak himself took to the floor after reading carefully the language of the Senate Bill and receiving the assurance from the President, and deemed the bill holds true to and has sufficient protections upholding the Hyde Amendment which are not in jeopardy.

Cao dismissed the Administration's announcement that President Obama would issue an Executive Order declaring the Senate bill will not interfere with the existing ban on federal

abortion funding, and in a letter to the President: "Despite your Administration's best intentions, the Executive Order you plan to issue stating that abortions would not be funded under the Senate Bill could be overturned in the federal courts given their consistent rulings that the federal government must pay for abortions unless Congress explicitly adds the Hyde Amendment prohibiting them."

Cao explained: "I came to Congress to represent my constituents and their needs. And, I have always said that I am an independent thinker who puts aside partisan wrangling to do the business of the people. At the end of the day, though, there are some principles on which I cannot compromise and on which my constituents would not want me to. Expanding federal funding of abortion is one."

In his letter, Cao told the President: "My respect for you, already deep, grew upon hearing you say that. On the basis of this statement and because of our personal relationship, I early on pledged myself as your partner in health care reform, and I gave you my word that I would come to you as an honest and thoughtful broker, checking politics and partisanship at the door for the good of my constituents and the nation. Nothing in my vote tonight changes that commitment."

In his press statement Cao admits, "I know that voting against the health care bill will probably be the death of my political career," but I have to live with myself, and I always reflect on the phrase of the New Testament, 'How does it profit a man's life to gain the world but to lose his soul.'"

Madness, Continued from page 10.

passed health care law as a political issue, depicting the measure as unaffordable and unpopular.

The venom expressed over the weekend shows no sign of abating.

The Web site *gawker.com* carried the headline, "Right-Wing Bloggers Demand Apology From Lawmakers Called 'Nigger' By Tea Partiers."

It noted that conservative blogger Glenn Reynolds posted the following comment: "Does [Rep. James] Clyburn Owe Tea Party Protesters an Apology? The bogus racism card has been played so often that I no longer find such charges very credible. I'm sure, however, that, true or not, they'll be played much more loudly than the indisputably true statements about the antiwar movement."

Referring to Black lawmakers who were called the n-word, conservative blogger Ann Althouse wrote, "It's outrageous for them to pose as victims without very good cause. So what if some idiot said a bad word?"

First, it was more than one idiot. Second, more than just a bad word was uttered. But none of that matters in March Madness. Let the games begin.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. He can be reached through his Web site, www.georgecurry.com. You can also follow him at www.twitter.com/currygeorge

Cover Story, Continued from page 3.

- Strengthening the existing Office of Minority Health at HHS, creating new Offices of Minority Health across HHS agencies, and establishes the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities at NIH an Institute.
 - Inclusion of coverage for resident of the U.S. territories, including a significant infusion of new Medicaid dollars, as well as access to the Exchange so that Americans in the territories will have access to affordable, high-quality health insurance plans.
 - Guarantees transparency on rates and enables state insurance commissioners to recommend to the National Insurance Commissioner whether a particular insurer should participate in the Health Insurance Exchange, taking into account excessive or unjustified premium increases in making that determination. This will hold private insurers accountable, ensure affordability and help provide quality coverage for American families.
- In addition to significant health care provisions, the CBC also fought for the inclusion of many very important education provisions including:
- Invests \$35 billion over 10 years to increase the maximum annual Pell Grant to \$5,550 in 2010 and to \$5,975 by 2017.

- Invests \$2.55 billion in Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority-Serving Institution
- Invests \$2 billion in a competitive grant program for community colleges to develop and improve educational or career training programs.
- Saves taxpayers \$61 billion over by switching to the less expensive Direct Loan program.

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.) also applauded the long-awaited passage. "Despite deafening protests from the other side, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office said the reforms included in this bill will reduce our deficit by \$143 billion in the first 10 years and \$1.2 trillion in the second 10 years. This bill will also create jobs, 400,000 good-paying jobs, reliable jobs, for every year and for small businesses. Small businesses will get a tax break on their health care premiums that will free up money for them to hire 80,000 more employees," he said in his floor speech. "Mr. Speaker, we have debated this issue for several generations. The time has come to act. This is the Civil Rights Act of the 21st Century. Tonight, we will take a significant step to move our country forward."

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The New Health Care Law What Can I Expect?

By Cheryl Mainor

After the cacophony of misinformation doled out by the Republican Congress in efforts to sink the bill, most Americans don't know what exactly is contained in the bill, and how if at all, the new laws will affect them. What will this new law mean for you as it goes into effect, and when the changes will be effective?

Here's what you can expect to happen:

This Year

Business Tax Credits

Small businesses with no more than 25 employees and average annual wages of \$40,000 will receive a tax credit. The credit is up to 35 percent of the employer's contribution to provide health insurance for employees. There is also up to a 25 percent credit for small nonprofit organizations.

Expanding the Adoption Credit and Adoption Assistance Program.

Increases the adoption tax credit and adoption assistance exclusion by \$1,000, makes the credit refundable, and extends the credit through 2011.

The enhancements are effective for tax years beginning after December 31, 2009

Immediate Changes

Medicare Drug Rebates – For all Medicare Part D enrollees who enter the doughnut hole. Currently, the coverage gap falls between \$2,700 and \$6,154 in total drug costs. Those patients will receive a one-time rebate of \$250 within the next few weeks.

Changes in 90 days:

Temporary Reinsurance Program for Businesses

A \$5 billion temporary reinsurance program will be created for employers to offset the cost of coverage for early retirees over the age of 55 who are not yet Medicare eligible.

Temporary High-Risk Insurance Pool Begins

A \$5 billion temporary national high-risk insurance pool will be created to provide health coverage to individuals with pre-existing medical conditions who have been uninsured for at least six months.

Changes Within Six Months:

Pre-existing Condition in Children Covered

Insurance companies will be barred from denying coverage to children who have pre-existing medical conditions.

Adult Dependent Children Covered

Insurance companies will offer to provide coverage for dependent children up to the age of 26 through their parents' insurance policy.

Insurance Coverage Limits Erased

Insurance plans will be prohibited from placing lifetime limits on how much they pay out to individual policyholders and group health plans and health insurance companies are prohibited from rescinding existing health insurance policies when a person gets sick as a way of avoiding covering the costs of enrollees' health care needs.

Preventive Services

Health insurance plans would be required to cover preventive services such as immunizations for children and cancer screenings for women. All new group and individual plans must provide first dollar coverage for preventive services

2011 Changes

Jan 1, 2011 Changes

Tax Changes on Health Care Savings Accounts

The federal tax on individuals who spend money from health care savings accounts on ineligible medical expenses will double to 20%

Medicare "Doughnut Hole"

Drug companies will provide a 50% discount on brand name prescription drugs for seniors who face a gap in drug coverage. More subsidies will be phased in through 2020 when the coverage gap will be closed.

Primary Care

Primary care doctors and general surgeons practicing in areas that lack primary care doctors would receive a 10% bonus payment under Medicare.

Increasing Training Support for Primary Care

It establishes a Graduate Medical Education policy allowing unused training slots to be re-distributed for the purposes of increasing primary care training at other sites.

Long-Term Care

A voluntary long-term care program called CLASS will be created. After at least five years of contributions, enrollees will be entitled to a \$50-a-day cash benefit to pay for long-term care.

New Annual Fee of Drug Makers

A total annual fee of \$2.5 billion will be imposed on pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Insurance Rebates

Health plans, including grandfathered plans, must annually report on the share of premium dollars spent on medical care and provide consumer rebates to enrollees if they spend less than 85% of their premium dollars on health care as opposed to administrative costs.

Changes by January 1, 2013:

Itemized Deductions for Unreimbursed Medical Expenses

The threshold for deducting such expenses would increase from 7.5% of adjusted gross income to 10%.

Medicare Taxes

The Medicare tax rate would increase by 0.9% from 1.45% to 2.35% on earnings over \$200,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for a family. Also a 3.8% Medicare tax will be collected on unearned income such as Capital Gains and Investments.

Changes by Jan 1, 2014:

Individual Mandate

Most Americans will be required to buy health insurance or pay fines of \$95 per individual up to \$285 per family or 1% of taxable household income whichever is greater.

Employer Requirements

Companies with 50 or more employees will pay a fine if any of their full-time workers qualified for federal health care subsidies.

Medicaid Expansion

The program for low-income Americans under the age of 65 will expand by increasing the income eligibility to 133% of federal poverty of \$29,327 for a family of four.

Federal Subsidies

Federal subsidies, which vary based on household income, will help offset the cost of buying insurance for Americans and legal residents who qualify.

Annual Fee on Insurance Companies

An annual fee totaling \$8 billion will be imposed on health insurance companies.

Health Insurance Exchanges

A state-based health care exchange, a marketplace where uninsured individuals and small businesses could comparison shop for the best insurance policy to meet their needs will be created.

Changes by 2016

Individual Mandate Effective Jan 1, 2015

Penalties for not carrying health coverage would increase to \$325 for each family member up to \$975 per family or 2% of taxable income, whichever is greater.

Annual Fee on Insurance Companies Increases

The annual fee on health insurance companies will increase to \$11.3 billion.

Individual Mandate Effective Jan 1, 2016

Penalties for not carrying insurance will increase to \$695 for each family member up to \$2,085 per family or 2.5% of taxable household income, whichever is greater.

Changes by 2018

Annual Fee on Health Insurance Companies Increases

The annual fee on health insurance companies would increase to \$13.9 billion in 2017 and \$14.3 in 2018.

Excise Tax on High-Cost Insurance (Cadillac) Plans

A 40% excise tax would be imposed on health care plans that cost more than \$20,200 for individual coverage and \$27,500 for family coverage. (Editors Note: This controversial portion of the bill is contained in the House Reconciliation Fix package which the Senate at press time will be debating; it is scheduled to be removed from the bill upon passage by the Senate and is likely to change.)



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