



WEEKLY UPDATE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE DNC COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

January 3, 2014

[This is Obamacare: New Year, New Coverage](#)

Starting January 1, [millions of Americans](#) are covered by provisions of the Affordable Care Act or have purchased health insurance from the state or federal marketplace. For families in every region and every state, this is life changing. Coverage over the holidays quoted newly insured Americans saying they now had “peace of mind” or felt a “huge sense of relief” while others were grateful for the “certain dignity” they felt from being able to afford insurance and grateful they could no longer be discriminated against because of a preexisting condition.

As we kick off 2014 with millions insured and more to come, Democrats remain united and committed to improve the law while the [Republican health care plan of repeal would take it all away](#).

Here are some of the stories from recent news coverage:

[In Missouri...“a huge sense of relief”](#)

“I feel a huge sense of relief,” said Katie R. Norvell, 33, a music therapist in St. Louis, who has been uninsured for three and a half years and has a pre-existing gynecological condition, endometriosis. She signed up Dec. 22 for a midlevel silver plan offered by Coventry Health Care, owned by Aetna, and has already begun making doctor’s appointments. “With coverage,” she said, “I can be my best self. Health insurance won’t control my job choices.”

[In New Jersey...“peace of mind”](#)

Ana Yngelmo, a 37-year-old immigration lawyer in Kearny, N.J., said she would use her new insurance to start seeing a primary care doctor and to get her first mammogram. Ms. Yngelmo, who said she had been uninsured for 16 months, chose a platinum plan with generous coverage and no deductible. She qualified for a tax-credit subsidy that will lower her monthly premium to \$350 — still expensive, she said, but worth it for peace of mind. “For me, insurance is about those tragic situations where you need some terrible surgery or get cancer,” said Ms. Yngelmo, who recently started her own law practice. “I just want to make sure that in those situations, I can go to whichever doctor I want and it will be covered.”

[In Tennessee...“a certain dignity”](#)

Dan Munstock knows this. A 62-year-old retiree in Greenville, Tenn., he hasn’t had insurance since he left his job as a crisis counselor in Miami six years ago...He qualified for a federal subsidy to help him afford the insurance, so he has to pay just \$87.57 a month toward his premium. After his welcome packet from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee arrived in the mail, Munstock was so eager to finish the process of enrolling and getting an insurance card that he picked up the phone to pay the first premium instead of using the mail. “It felt really good,” he said. Paying toward his own insurance, he said, gives him “a certain dignity,” a feeling that he is not “one of the takers.” The next day, he called the doctor’s office. His appointment for a physical is Jan. 2. “I’m feeling surprisingly moved by all of this,” Munstock said. “This finally seems real. And I’m thinking that maybe all the talk and the promises and the messy politics can actually lead to something good after all.”

[In Texas...“I love the fact I can keep my doctor”](#)

Working downtown in a lofty incubator office, DeZengotita said she pored over her insurance options when the federal government began accepting applications in October. She waited patiently to get through when the federal website collapsed. She found a plan for \$414 a month, qualifying for a \$63 subsidy. The boys

will stay on her plan. "I love the fact I can keep my doctor," said DeZengotita, who works 30 hours a week. "I spent so much of my life getting health care at Planned Parenthood that it's a luxury to have a doctor at all."

In Minnesota..."To me, it's a big deal"

Much of the worry and fear eased when she signed onto the MNsure website in late October and pushed through the application process, bugs and all. When the system informed Pierce that she and her children are eligible for Medicaid with no premium payments, she sighed with relief and ran to her boyfriend's "man cave" to tell him the good news. "I am looking forward to having health coverage again, because I do bring the kids in for shots whenever they're required and [I have] myself annually examined," Pierce said. "It helps ease your mind when you know that that part of your life is covered." "To me, it's a big deal."

In Georgia...insured after 20 years of being uninsured

William Hannah of Cleveland, Ga., who has been uninsured for about 20 years, said he was looking forward to using his new coverage to see a specialist for lower back problems and numbness in his limbs. But Mr. Hannah said he had canceled the first plan he signed up for, from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Georgia, after realizing it would not pay for treatment at the medical center closest to his home. He switched to a silver plan from Alliant Health Plans and qualified for a tax subsidy that will lower his premium costs to \$56 a month.

In Maryland...Medicaid expansion recipient says "for me, it's fabulous"

Maryland expanded Medicaid, which means that 55-year-old Nancy Beigel of Beltsville will be getting insurance for the first time in about a decade. With an income of \$11,000 a year from her small cleaning service, she hasn't been able to afford insurance but didn't qualify until now for Medicaid. An emergency appendectomy in 2009 ended up requiring two operations — the first one failed to properly remove the appendix. Beigel was left not only with \$91,000 in medical debt but also a lump in her abdomen that she believes is a hernia. She hasn't been to a doctor to get a diagnosis and, in the meantime, she avoids "really heavy lifting" because she's worried that doing so could cause a potentially fatal complication. Medicaid, she said, "is not exactly glamorous." But she is glad to have coverage beginning in January. "I'm so desperate to have insurance," she said. "For me, it's fabulous."

1.3 Million Americans See Unemployment Insurance Cut Off Because of the GOP

On January 1, as Republicans in Congress let unemployment insurance benefits expire for millions of Americans, White House Director of the National Economic Council, Gene B. Sperling, released the following statement on the economic impacts of their inaction:

"This New Year's Day, there is likely less joy and more fear and distress in the homes of 1.3 million Americans who this week have seen their unemployment insurance suddenly cut off — a vital lifeline that these Americans depend on as they fight to find a job. There would be no better New Year's resolution for Congress to make today than to commit to making the first new legislation for the new year the restoration of emergency unemployment insurance for those who have this week just been cut off.

"Failing to extend emergency unemployment insurance through 2014 will negatively impact 14 million Americans — the 4.9 million workers who will see unemployment insurance cut off and the approximately 9 million additional family members they are supporting. But if Congress does the right thing and acts to extend emergency unemployment benefits through 2014, it is estimated to lead to 200,000 jobs and a fifth of a point of additional economic growth. This emergency unemployment insurance is temporary and by design will taper off as the unemployment falls around the nation."

Click [here](#) to read Sperling's full statement.

Christie Bridge Scandal Continues Well Into the New Year

2014 was supposed to be the year Chris Christie charged onto the national stage at the helm of the RGA to lay the groundwork for a potential run for President.

Instead, Christie is starting 2014 on his heels—embroiled in a scandal over accusations that his Administration sought retribution against the Mayor of Fort Lee because he refused to endorse Christie by shutting down lanes on the busiest bridge in the world, burdening school kids, commuters and first responders. It's been months since the lane closures but the steady drip of new revelations continue to make national and local headlines - resignations, multiple investigations and a look at Christie's record of bullying - but no answers from the Governor to the simple question: **Why were the lanes shut?**

On January 9th, David Wildstein, Christie's high school friend who ordered the lane closures and resigned in the wake of the scandal, is slated to testify about lane closures. Will he be able to fully explain the Christie Administration's actions?

Please see below for a round-up of coverage from over the holidays of Christie's Bridge Scandal and his record of seeking retribution against political enemies:

Star-Ledger Editorial: A new low on the George Washington Bridge scandal

Key Point: The official story, embraced by the governor, is that the lane closures were part of a traffic study. If so, why did they keep it a secret from Foye and even local police? Why was it ordered by Wildstein, a political appointee with no expertise in traffic? And why didn't they use computer models to predict the results, a common practice? This scandal will live until those questions are answered.

NYT: Stories Add Up as Bully Image Trails Christie

Key Point: But the gesture would come to seem genteel compared with the fate suffered by others in disagreements with Mr. Christie: a former governor who was stripped of police security at public events; a Rutgers professor who lost state financing for cherished programs; a state senator whose candidate for a judgeship suddenly stalled; another senator who was disinvited from an event. Now, the governor is dogged by another accusation of petty political revenge. Two close political allies ordered the abrupt shutdown of two local access lanes on the George Washington Bridge in September, gridlocking Fort Lee, N.J., for four days. The borough's mayor said it was punitive because he had declined to endorse the governor's re-election.

Bergen Record's Mike Kelly: Assemblyman says order for GWB traffic tie-up came from outside Port Authority

Key Point: After reviewing more than 900 pages of Port Authority emails, text messages and other documents, Wisniewski said he could not find any credible, traffic-related reason for closing two of three lanes from Fort Lee to the tollbooths. The closures backed up traffic into the crowded borough for hours during a four-day period last September — including the Sept. 11 anniversary when police at the bridge are on high alert for terrorist attacks.

Bergen Record: Emails show Port Authority officials were warned of hardships caused by GWB lane closures

Key Point: Fort Lee police and medical personnel had been delayed while responding to a report of a missing child and a cardiac arrest, according to an email sent to the pair from a lower-ranking Port Authority employee. Despite that warning — laid out in one of three internal agency emails obtained by The Record — the two Christie executives, who had quietly decided only days earlier to divert local lanes leading to the bridge, ignored the pleas of Fort Lee's police and mayor, local officials have said.

Asbury Park Press: Christie sticking to Baroni's story on George traffic study

Key Point: Gov. Chris Christie says he has no interest in seeing proof of a traffic study that his top Port Authority appointees claim prompted George Washington Bridge lane closures in September.

President Bill Clinton Swears in Bill de Blasio as Mayor of New York City

On Wednesday, former President Bill Clinton swore in Bill de Blasio as New York City's first Democratic Mayor in 25 years. To recognize the occasion, the DNC shared the graphic below over social media:



Click [here](#) to view and share the graphic on Facebook.

In the States

- Last Friday, Colorado Democratic Party Chairman Rick Palacio released a statement after Congressional Republicans denied benefits to 1.3 million long-term unemployed Americans. Palacio said that the refusal to extend these benefits shows where Colorado's Republican leadership stands: "It is time for Tea Party loyalists like Mike Coffman, Doug Lamborn and Scott Tipton to fight for their constituents best interests not against them. Congress's number one priority should be a return to the mission of protecting the American people rather than sacrificing essential benefits and programs for cheap political gains."
- On Thursday, the Democratic Party of Wisconsin [issued a release](#) on Governor Scott Walker's failed economic policies that are hurting Wisconsin's families. Today, 70% of Wisconsinites say their personal financial situation has stayed the same or gotten worse since Walker took office. And just last week, Walker announced that he supports the Tea Party's agenda to eliminate the state's income tax, a move that [according to the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance](#) would raise sales tax 200% and put a greater burden on hardworking middle-class Wisconsin families. View the full release [here](#).
- Last week, the Wyoming Democratic Party held a press conference call to continue the party's campaign to pressure Governor Mead to expand Medicaid in the state and highlight the positive impacts of the Affordable Care Act in Wyoming. To read about the call on the Wyoming Democratic Party's website click [here](#). Click on these headlines to read some of the press coverage from the conference call: [Wyoming Democrats pressure governor over Medicaid](#) | [Wyoming Democratic Party Chairman disappointed in Governor Mead's Medicaid recommendation](#)