

BGA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



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Senate Finance Committee Released Financing Options

Senate Finance Committee released financing options for health care reform late in the month. There were a variety of choices (**no conclusion**) including the following:

1. The repeal of the itemized deduction for medical expenses. An alternative was that the Adjusted Gross Income threshold could be raised.
2. The repeal or scale back of a special deduction for Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies.
3. Place a cap on the amount of employer-sponsored health coverage that is excludible from gross income.
4. Limits to consumer-directed health insurance products were also suggested. These may include modifying or repealing the exclusion for employer-provided reimbursement of medical expense under FSA and HRA arrangements. Also proposed, limiting HSA contributions.

We will keep you advised, as more details are made available.

Kerry bill would ban insurers from charging women higher premium

On May 5th, Sen. John F. Kerry (D-MA) “introduced a bill that would stop insurers from charging women higher premiums, or denying or limiting coverage based on whether they are pregnant”. Women’s Health Insurance Fairness Act would “prevent insurers in the individual market from charging women higher premiums than men”, and “prevent insurers in the individual market from denying or limiting coverage based on a current or past pregnancy or past or future method of delivery.” Secretary of Health and Human Services will monitor compliance with the requirements of this Act and assess fines against any health insurance company that fails to submit the required data.

Coming in Early June

The Democrats have scheduled the release of HealthCare Reform proposed legislation the first week of June.

Wellness Incentives Being Discussed

Congress **is considering** proposals to provide tax credits or other subsidies to employers who offer wellness programs that meet federal criteria.

In Arizona

Locally, the Republican legislators are supporting Health Care Freedom Act, Resolution 2014. This Resolution would prohibit any law or regulation that forces a person or employer to participate in a health care system and would also prohibit fines or penalties against anyone that purchases health care services for a private entity. The goal appears to be the prevention of adopting a single-payer system. It would also prohibit the implementation of both an individual coverage mandate and an employer mandate.