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ROCKEFELLER SAYS SUPREME COURT'S DECISION REAFFIRMS HEALTH REFORM LAW

Expresses Concern About Impact on Medicaid

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Jay Rockefeller, Chairman of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health Care, today issued the following statement on the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the health care reform law.

“Today, the Supreme Court confirmed what Congress knew to be true when we wrote the health reform law – that it is constitutional. Health care reform is the law of the land and, given the court's decisive ruling, I am hopeful that we will move forward with its implementation in earnest.

“As a nation, we should use today's decision to push reset on the national dialogue about health care reform and refocus on why we wrote this law in the first place – to provide affordable coverage for 32 million uninsured Americans, to link provider payments to the quality of care provided instead of the volume of services, to make Medicare better for our seniors, and to enact health insurance reforms that put patients over insurance company profits.

“One concern I have is the impact of the Supreme Court ruling today on the Medicaid expansion. When we wrote the law, we worked very hard to make sure that low-income Americans who aren't currently eligible for Medicaid, but still can't afford to pay for health insurance, are given an affordable option through the expansion of Medicaid. It appears the ruling could have seriously undermined their health care options. The decision still leaves in place an enormous financial incentive for states to do the right thing and expand coverage to this group. I hope every state will do that because these are good people who effectively have no other realistic option for affordable health care.”

Rockefeller further stated his reaction to the Supreme Court ruling.

“The idea that the vast majority of Americans are satisfied with health care the way it is today simply doesn't match what I have heard from West Virginians about health care over many, many years. West Virginians are tired of insurance companies drastically raising their premiums every single year – including a 55 percent jump in West Virginia in just seven years -- without providing better care and in some cases kicking people off when they get sick and actually need medical services. West Virginians are tired of hearing that our state ranks among the top states for

prevalence of chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. And, West Virginia families who have health insurance are tired of paying thousands of dollars more in premiums each year to cover the costs of the uninsured. The status quo is not acceptable, which is why Congress passed this health reform law.

“This law is not perfect – no law ever is. But, there simply is no moral justification for anyone sitting back when individuals and families throughout our state – often our own friends and neighbors – don’t have health insurance. And there is no financial justification for a health care system that forces people to seek care in the emergency room because they can’t afford insurance. Uncompensated care for the uninsured adds \$2,000 on average to family health insurance premiums and \$760 on average to individual health premiums in West Virginia.

“It’s real people in West Virginia who I’m concerned about – not keeping score in Washington. I will continue to stand by every West Virginian, and I won’t back down until they get the health care they need. Today was a vital milestone in that fight and I am proud of the role that I played in bringing this law into existence.”

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