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*Statement by U.S. PIRG Health Care Policy Analyst Michael Russo on the Supreme Court's
announcement that they will review challenges to health reform's constitutionality*

The Supreme Court's decision to hear arguments on the new health reform law means that soon, the question of its constitutionality will be settled, allowing states and policymakers to focus on lowering costs for consumers without being distracted by counterproductive lawsuits.

Upholding the law would be a clear win for consumers, while overturning all or portions of the new health reform law would leave consumers paying more for coverage that might not be there for them when they get sick. The health reform law protects consumers with pre-existing conditions from being discriminated against by insurance companies, and helps rein in the out-of-control cost of health care.

In particular if the requirement that those who can afford insurance purchase it is struck down, Americans could be left paying more than \$1,000 extra a year. Without the requirement, those who choose to go without coverage will continue to use the emergency room as their only health care and shift those costs onto the insured.

The decision will also have significant consequences for the states, many of whom have already taken action to implement and improve on health reform. By creating new health insurance marketplaces and stepping up review of insurers' premium increases, states are helping to deliver lower costs and higher quality for consumers. A ruling striking down parts of the federal law could undermine these significant reforms and erase the meaningful progress that states have made.

From the extraordinary step of scheduling five and a half hours of argument instead of the usual one, it's clear that the Court is looking to base its decision on a full understanding of the issues involved. Given the stakes for consumers and the states, they're right to be so cautious.

With the majority of lower courts hearing these challenges affirming the constitutionality of the law, we are confident that the Supreme Court will follow suit and uphold health reform.

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