

MNA/NNU vow to fight for real reform after Supreme Court upholds Affordable Care Act

The Supreme Court has ruled that the national Affordable Care Act, including the individual mandate, is constitutional. The ruling came down on a 5-to-4 vote, and the surprise swing voter was Chief Justice John Roberts, appointed by George W. Bush.

While Roberts, and therefore a majority of the court, did not believe that the mandate was constitutional under the federal government's powers to regulate commerce between states, a narrow majority did believe that it was constitutional under the government's powers of taxation. The mandate having been upheld, the rest of the law was also found to be constitutional, except for a minor ruling regarding the federal government's powers to withhold Medicaid funding from states not agreeing to the law's new Medicaid eligibility criteria.

The court decision is not the end of the MNA/NNU's push for a permanent solution to our nation's health care crisis.

Following the decision, the NNU pledged to step up the campaign for a reform that is not based on extending the grip of a failed private insurance system, but "on a universal program based on patient need, not on profits or ability to pay. That's Medicare for all," said NNU Co-President and MNA member Karen Higgins, RN, who was outside the court speaking with the media when the decision was handed down. "It is not time to stop, but a reminder to begin that effort anew."

"Nurses experience the crisis our patients continue to endure every day. That's the reason we will continue to work for reform that is universal, that doesn't bankrupt families or leave patients in the often cruel hands of merciless

insurance companies," said Higgins, who works as a critical care nurse at Boston Medical Center.

27 million people will remain with no health coverage, facing huge price hikes and high charges by insurance companies, drug companies, and hospitals, employers will continue to drop coverage or shift more costs to workers, and insurance companies will continue to deny needed medical care.

Fixing health care is also critical for helping people suffering in the economic crisis and reducing the fiscal crisis for state and local governments.

We need a more humane health care system—one that is not based on profit and ability to pay, but on patient need and a single standard of care.

Nurses know the solution: Improve and open up Medicare to everyone.

Medicare is the most cost effective and universal approach. It meets the legal test, and is widely popular even among those who hated the Obama law.

The Supreme Court decision will not stop employers from dropping coverage or shifting more costs to workers. It won't stop the insurance companies, drug companies and hospitals from over charging patients. It won't stop insurance companies from denying care they don't want to pay for.

"Since most of the components of the law do not go into effect until 2014, we have time to get it right by moving toward comprehensive national reform that is genuinely universal and not based on private profit or ability to pay—by expanding Medicare to cover everyone," Higgins concluded. ■

NNU delegate election results 2012

MNA delegates to the NNU Convention were elected through a secret ballot in June to three-year terms.

Region 1

Delegates

Patricia Healy
Ann Lewin
Donna Stern

Alternate

None

Region 2

Delegates

Michael D'Intinosanto
Katie Murphy
Marie Ritacco
Lynne Starbard
Ellen Smith

Alternate

Gary Kellenberger

Region 3

Delegates

Ellen Farley
Cynthia Dyer
Michael Savoy
P. Karen Duffy

Alternate

Donna Dudik

Region 4

Delegates

Kathleen "Kay" Marshall
Donna Kelly-Williams
Brian Zahn
Patricia Rogers Sullivan

Alternate

None

Region 5

Delegates

Kathleen Reardon
Dan Rec
Joan Ballantyne
Seamus Whelan
Ann Marie McDonagh

Alternate

Karen Coughlin

the Massachusetts
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