

NAHU Newswire

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Customized Briefing for Kimberly Barry-Curley

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Leading the News

US Ranked Last In Healthcare Quality Survey.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (6/17, Terhune) reports, "Despite having the costliest care, the U.S. ranks last among 11 industrialized countries on healthcare quality and access, according to a new report" from the Commonwealth Fund. The report "ranked the United Kingdom first overall, even though its per-capita health spending is less than half that of the U.S."

[USA Today](#) (6/17, Winter) reports this morning that while the ACA "is increasing the number of Americans with coverage and improving access to care," the survey "relied on data from before the law was implemented fully." The study noted that the ACA "will further encourage the efficient organization and delivery of health care, as well as investment in important preventive and population health measures."

In the [Washington Post](#) (6/17, Bernstein) "To Your Health" blog, Lenny Bernstein writes that "the U.S. fares well in providing preventive care and patient-centered care, according to the report."

However, "among its many deficiencies, according to" lead author Karen Davis "and the report, are a relative shortage of primary care physicians; lack of access to primary care, especially for the poor; a large number of low-income residents who skip needed care, do not get recommended tests or do not fill prescriptions because of cost; high infant mortality; inordinate levels of mortality from conditions that could have been controlled, such as high blood pressure; and lower healthy life expectancy at age 60."

A [New York Times](#) (6/17, Subscription Publication) editorial on the study says that the US' poor showing reflects "the high cost of its medical care and the absence of universal health insurance, a situation being addressed by the Affordable Care Act."

Also reporting on the study are [CBS News](#) (6/17), [NBC News](#) (6/17, Fox), the [Houston Chronicle](#) (6/17), [The Hill](#) (6/17, Al-faruque), [Vox](#) (6/17, Kliff), another [Vox](#) (6/17, McIntyre), the [Daily Caller](#) (6/17, Hurtubise), the [Washington Examiner](#) (6/17), the [Washington Times](#) (6/17, Howell), the [Atlantic](#) (6/17, Khazan), and [Modern Healthcare](#) (6/16, Subscription Publication).

Gallup Poll Finds Majority Of Americans Satisfied With Healthcare System. [The Hill](#) (6/17, Al-Faruque) reports on a new Gallup poll which "finds 66 percent are satisfied with how the healthcare system is working for them." The survey also identified "a correlation between whether a person is insured, and whether a person is satisfied." The article notes that Gallup "does not mention

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the new healthcare law in its survey as way of trying to be politically neutral.”

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The PPACA certification course is a certification of expertise in the provisions and implementation of health reform. It does not meet state or federal requirements that may be necessary or required to sell exchange-based plans.





Legislation and Policy



CMS Launches New ACA Promotion Website.

[The Hill](#)   (6/17, Al-Faruque) reports that on Monday, CMS “launched a public campaign website,” designed to promote benefits available under the Affordable Care Act. The campaign titled, “From Coverage to Care,” aims “to answer questions consumers may have about their new health coverage and help them make the most of their new benefits.”



The [Congressional Quarterly](#)   (6/17, Adams, Subscription Publication) reports that the campaign is also sometimes referred to as “You got covered, so now what?” and looks to help “first-time purchasers of insurance or those who have a rudimentary understanding of how coverage works.”





Enroll America Releases Report Analyzing ACA Outreach. [The Hill](#)   (6/17, Al-Faruque) reports that, according to Enroll America, “telling people about available financial assistance is the most effective way to motivate the uninsured to buy health insurance under ObamaCare.” To produce the report, the pro-ACA grassroots group “analyzed its work to educate people and help them sign up for health insurance in the federal and state marketplaces.”

VA Health System Crisis Has Led Some To Question Future Of ACA.



[Roll Call](#)   (6/17, Reichard, Subscription Publication) reports that “the crisis over wait times and access to care within the Department of Veterans Affairs health system” has led to “questions about whether similar problems could occur” as the Affordable Care Act increases government-subsidized coverage across the country. As the article explains, while the ACA expands coverage to millions of Americans, “experts say coverage isn’t the same as access, and lower-income Americans may experience barriers in some markets.” Still, VA healthcare “is limited by an annual budget,” and coverage under the ACA isn’t.

Poll: Massachusetts Residents Support State Health Law Despite Website Troubles.



On its website, the [Boston Globe](#)   (6/17, Rice) offers continuing coverage of the poll which found that “despite the state health insurance website’s troubles this year, the majority of the Massachusetts residents surveyed (63 percent) still support the state’s 2006 universal health care law.”

[Reuters](#)   (6/17, Barber) quotes Robert J. Blendon, the coordinator of the poll, who explained, “We have eight years of support for this law. The fact that computers aren’t working well is unlikely to change that.” [The Hill](#)   (6/17, Viebeck) also reports.



Kentucky Governor To Speak On ACA Panel Tuesday.

The [Louisville \(KY\) Courier-Journal](#)   (6/17, Carroll) reports that Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear will travel to Washington, DC, to “be on a panel Tuesday discussing the first enrollment period under” the Affordable Care Act. The panel is part of Enroll America’s two-day conference, and the organization’s president, Annie Filipic, is slated to serve on the panel with Beshear.



Minnesota’s Rate Of Uninsurance Plummets Due To ACA.

[Kaiser Health News](#)   (6/17, Stawicki) offers continuing coverage of the study which found “the rate of uninsured people in Minnesota tumbled to less than 5 percent, despite all the problems with its Obamacare website.” According to the report, from the University of Minnesota’s State Health Access Data Assistance Center, “the rate of uninsurance in the state fell from 8.2 percent to 4.9 percent” from September to March of this year.



Oregon Seems Poised To Launch Lawsuit Against Exchange Contractor.

The [AP](#)   (6/17, Cooper) reports that Oregon has moved “closer” to “a potential lawsuit against the developers of its failed health insurance website.” On Monday, the state hired “a phalanx of lawyers” and issued “demands for evidence and other material that could be used in a civil case against technology giant Oracle Corp.” The article notes that Gov. John Kitzhaber (D) “blames” Oracle “for bungling the software for Cover Oregon,” the state’s ACA marketplace.



[The Oregonian](#)   (6/17, Budnick) reports that with these “demands,” the threat of a lawsuit seems “imminent.”

Meanwhile, the [Portland \(OR\) Business Journal](#)   (6/17, Hayes, Subscription Publication) “Health Care Inc.” blog reports that newly-tapped Cover Oregon chief Aaron Patnode “looks forward to righting the ship.”

Connecticut Holding Public Hearing Regarding Premium Hike Proposals.



The [Connecticut Mirror](#)   (6/17, Becker) reports that on Friday, June 27, the Connecticut Insurance Department will hold “a public hearing on the proposal by Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield to raise premiums for its health plans starting Jan. 1, 2015.” The hearing “will cover proposals for new rates for plans sold on the state’s insurance exchange, Access Health CT, as well as plans sold outside the exchange.”



Idaho Approves CO-OP To Offer Plans On Exchange Next Year.



The [Idaho Statesman](#)   (6/17, Dutton) reports that the Idaho Department of Insurance “has approved Mountain Health CO-OP’s application to sell insurance in the state,” meaning the state’s exchange “will have at least one more competitor on the market this fall.”



Public Health and Private Healthcare Systems



Missouri Republicans Details Failed Effort To Reach Medicaid Expansion Deal.



The [Kansas Health Institute](#)   (6/16) reports that Missouri State Sen. Ryan Silvey (R) says “a last-minute deal to expand Medicaid eligibility in Missouri almost materialized in the waning days of this year’s legislative session.” According to KHI, “The last-minute talks – which Silvey says included a meeting among himself, GOP leaders from the House and Senate, and Gov. Jay Nixon – appear to have moved the issue of Medicaid expansion closer to the finish line than it has been since the debate began two years ago.”

The [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)   (6/17) reports that Missouri State Sen. Ed Emery (R) recently wrote to a constituent who urged him to back Medicaid expansion: “We live in a nation and an era that facilitates physical moves between states. Individuals and families are free to consider moving to states with differing and even contrasting government policies. That is the beauty of federalism.”



Kansas Hospital Association Renews Push For Medicaid Expansion. The [Kansas Health Institute](#)   (6/16) reported that “it’s make-or-break time for advocates of Medicaid expansion in Kansas,” and the Kansas Hospital Association “is preparing to shift its lobbying campaign into high gear.” According to KHI, KHA “spent the last two legislative sessions trying to stimulate a conversation about expansion” and “bankrolled a study that projected the economic benefits of expansion.”



The [Kansas Health Institute](#)   (6/16) also reported that Kansas is among those states that “has seen a significant jump in the number of people enrolled in its Medicaid-CHIP programs, even without loosening its relatively tight eligibility standards.”



North Carolina Protestors Continue To Push For Medicaid Expansion. The [Raleigh \(NC\) News & Observer](#)   (6/16) reports that on Monday, “days after persuading a Superior Court judge to suspend some new rules for the N.C. Legislative Building,” some “Moral Monday” protesters “continued their push for repeal of laws and policies passed in 2013 that scaled back unemployment benefits, rejected federal Medicaid expansion, directed more public school money to private school vouchers and phased out teacher tenure and shifted pay toward performance-based policies.”



Indiana Official’s Exit Tied To Medicaid Expansion Alternative Talks. The [Evansville \(IN\) Courier & Press](#)   (6/16, Weidenbener) reports that Debra Minott, “the head of Indiana’s Family and Social Services Administration, is on her way out just as negotiations heat up with federal officials over Gov. Mike Pence’s alternative to a traditional Medicaid expansion.” According to the C&P, “A source close to Pence had said earlier Monday that the administration had begun discussions with Minott ‘about a change in direction’ at the agency,” and “a few hours later,” Minott “released her statement.”





Vitter Open To Expanding Medicaid If Elected Louisiana Governor.

Sen. David Vitter, the Louisiana Republican who is running for governor of the state in 2015, made news Monday when he “left open the possibility of expanding” the state’s Medicaid program under the Affordable Care Act, the [AP](#)   (6/17, DeSlatte) reports. Vitter, an “ardent critic” of the ACA, revealed that “he’s not opposed to accepting the billions of federal dollars if Louisiana can improve the performance of its Medicaid program rather than expand ‘a pretty broken system.’” The article notes that Vitter’s “willingness...stands in contrast to Gov. Bobby Jindal’s staunch opposition to the idea.”



[The Hill](#)   (6/17, Viebeck) quotes Vitter as saying, “I think first and foremost we need to reform and improve Medicaid, and we need to do everything necessary to do that, not just focus on whether we expand or don’t expand a fundamentally broken system. Could more federal resources help to do that? They could if it’s done right and if it’s done in a constructive way.”



The [New Orleans Times-Picayune](#)   (6/17, O’Donoghue) reports that the Medicaid expansion comments, made at the Baton Rouge Press Club luncheon Monday, were an example of Vitter’s “not-so-subtle shots at Jindal.”

Noting that current Gov. Bobby Jindal, “one of the expansion’s staunchest opponents,” is “term-locked from running for re-election,” [Vox](#)   (6/17, Lopez) says that Vitter’s stance “increases the chances that Louisiana will become one of the next Republican states to adopt the Medicaid expansion.”

Also reporting are the [Baton Rouge \(LA\) Advocate](#)   (6/17, Millhollon), [MSNBC](#)   (6/17, Whitaker), and [The Wire](#)   (6/17, John).



Illinois Expanding Medicaid Coverage Using ACA Funds.

The [Chicago Tribune](#)   (6/17, Garcia) reports that Monday, Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn (D) “signed into law a Medicaid expansion bill that will tap \$2.4 billion in federal funds over the next several years to provide more health care coverage for the poor.” Part of the funding is made available under the Affordable Care Act.



The [Chicago Sun-Times](#)   (6/17, Thomas) reports that the law will restore “two types of Medicaid coverage that were cut two years ago to save money.” Starting on October 1, “adult dental care and podiatric care will again be covered by Medicaid.”

New Hampshire Residents Can Apply For Newly Expanded Medicaid Starting July 1.



The [AP](#)   (6/17) reports that New Hampshire Governor Maggie Hassan (D) announced on Monday that adults who qualify for

expanded Medicaid under the ACA can begin applying July 1. The coverage will begin August 15. The [New Hampshire Union Leader](#)   (6/17) also reports.



Primary-Care Providers Seek Extension Of ACA Provision Raising Medicaid Payments.

The [Modern Healthcare](#)   (6/17, Robeznieks, Subscription Publication) reports that a coalition of “21 physician associations and healthcare organizations” have sent a letter to Congress, “seeking an extension of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act’s two-year provision equalizing Medicaid and Medicare payments for primary-care services.”

MACPAC: Congress Needs To Extend CHIP Funding For Two More Years.

[Bloomberg BNA](#)   (6/17, Teske) reports that last Friday, the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) “recommended Congress extend federal funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program for an additional two years,” and warned that “unless CHIP funding is extended, there is a risk that many children might become uninsured, unable to access either employer-sponsored insurance or coverage under the Affordable Care Act.” According to Bloomberg BNA, “CHIP funding is scheduled to run out shortly after fiscal year 2015.”



Study: Over 10,000 Alaskans Fall Into Coverage Gap.

The [Fairbanks \(AK\) News-Miner](#)   (6/17) reports that the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services estimates that the number of Alaskans “not covered by the federal healthcare marketplace who would be aided by Medicaid expansion” is “between 10,000 and 12,000,” although “previous reports by the federal Department of Health and Human Services estimated close to 40,000 Alaskans” fall into the Medicaid gap.

Maryland Takes Steps To Comply With Medicare Waiver Agreement.



The [Baltimore Business Journal](#)   (6/16, Subscription Publication) reports that Maryland’s Health Services Cost Review Commission “can check two big items off its list — establishing hospital rates for fiscal 2015 and negotiating budgets that will limit revenue for the year.” According to the BBJ, “Both are big steps under Maryland’s new Medicare waiver agreement with the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.”

UnitedHealth Cutting Medicare Advantage Providers In Several States.

[Modern Healthcare](#)   (6/17, Demko, Subscription Publication) reports that UnitedHealth Group “is continuing to eliminate doctors from its provider networks for Medicare Advantage plans in states across the country.” For example, in recent weeks, doctors “in Alabama, Georgia, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Tennessee have received notifications that their services will no longer be” covered by the plans.



Senior Market News

Seniors Helped CMS Recover At Least \$9.1 Million In Fraudulent Claims Last Year.

[Congressional Quarterly](#)   (6/17, Young, Subscription Publication) reports that the HHS IG Office estimates that “seniors trained to spot health fraud appear to have recovered at least \$9.1 million for Medicare and Medicaid in 2013, up from about \$6 million the year earlier,” and “cautioned that its assessments of money brought in by a voluntary effort known as the Senior Medicare Patrol may not fully reflect its contribution to federal coffers.” According to CQ, the Senior Medicare Patrol “has its roots in a 1990s demonstration project, Operation Restore Trust” that Sen. Tom Harkin “helped start.”

Consumer Directed Healthcare News

Patients Struggle To Understand Health Insurance Terms.

In an 1,280-word article, [Kaiser Health News](#)   (6/16, Gorman) reveals that across the country, many are “struggling to learn the foreign language of health insurance.” The piece explains that, amid coverage expansion brought by the Affordable Care Act, a large portion of prospective consumers remain unfamiliar with “insurance jargon” like “deductible, co-pay, premium, co-insurance”

Monday's Lead Stories

- [Obama Administration Working To Verify ACA Subsidy Recipients' Eligibility.](#)
- [Despite Issues, Massachusetts Public Still Supports Massachusetts Healthcare Law.](#)
- [California Budget Includes Funds To Continue Expanding Medicaid.](#)
- [Effect Of Small Business Exchange Delays Examined.](#)
- [Nonprofit Hospitals Increasing Market Share In Lucrative Suburban Areas.](#)

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