



Press Release

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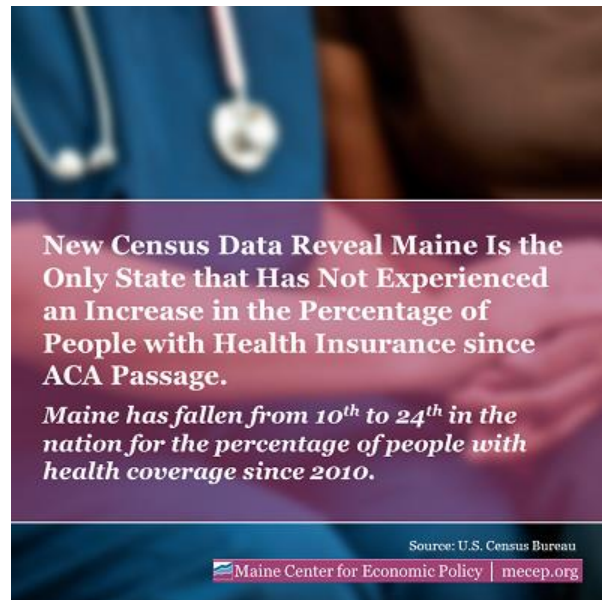
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New Census Data Reveal Maine Is the Only State that Has Not Experienced an Increase in the Percentage of People with Health Insurance since ACA Passage

Maine has fallen from 10th to 24th in the nation for the percentage of people with health coverage since 2010

Augusta, Maine (Wednesday, September 16, 2015) New Census Bureau data released today show Maine is the only state that has not experienced an increase in the percentage of people with health insurance coverage since passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010. The new data also show that Maine currently ranks 24th in the nation in the percentage of those with health coverage--- down from 10th in 2010.

"As these disappointing census data show, Mainers are bearing the brunt of the LePage administration's failed health care policy," said Maine Center for Economic Policy (MECEP) Executive Director Garrett Martin. "While other states are making big progress, Maine has failed to move forward and has fallen from among the states with the highest percentage of people with health coverage to 24th in the nation. The governor's success in cutting access to health care for low-income individuals and parents in his first term and his continued opposition to accepting federal funds to expand Medicaid make Maine an outlier when it comes to making sure that more people have access to affordable health care. This will have lasting effects for the health of Maine people and our economy."



The Census Bureau today released the country's official data on health insurance rates, which showed that 134,000 or 10.1% of Mainers lacked access to health insurance in 2014, statistically the same as in 2010 when Congress passed the ACA.

"Maine is the only state that hasn't seen any improvement in the percentage or number of people with health coverage since 2010," Martin said. "Every other state can boast the exact opposite. They are covering more people and they have a lower percentage of their population without insurance. While a big driver of this is expanded Medicaid, even those states that haven't accepted federal funds to provide health care to low-income residents are still seeing significant gains in health coverage thanks to other provisions of the ACA."

In order to strengthen state-run Medicaid programs, under the ACA the federal government agreed to pay all the costs of providing Medicaid to people making up to just \$32,600 per year for a family of four (138 percent of the federal poverty rate) through 2016, and then no less than 90 percent of the costs thereafter. But the Supreme Court left it up to the states to decide whether to extend their benefits to these people and accept the federal funding to do so, and Maine has not yet done so.

Though the legislature has voted repeatedly to accept ACA funds to expand Medicaid, they have failed to muster the votes to override vetoes by Governor LePage.

Maine's failure to accept ACA funds is particularly unfortunate because Medicaid has a strong record of success since it was first started 50 years ago, including:

- **Kids who receive care through Medicaid do better in school and become more productive adults.** They miss fewer school days due to illness or injury and are likelier to finish high school, attend college, and graduate from college. And as adults, they earn more and have fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations.
- **Medicaid is cost-effective.** Medicaid's costs per beneficiary are far lower and have grown more slowly than private insurance.
- **Medicaid expansion saves states money.** The federal government pays the entire cost of expanding Medicaid to more struggling people through 2016, and no less than 90 percent thereafter. In states that have expanded Medicaid, hospitals are treating fewer uninsured patients, and as a result, states are saving money.
- **Medicaid has improved the health of millions of Americans.** In Oregon, for example, people participating in Medicaid were more likely to receive preventive care, have a primary care doctor, and to receive a diagnosis of and treatment for common problems, like depression and diabetes. As a result, they were 40 percent less likely to have health problems in the last six months compared to people without health insurance.

"It's not too late for Maine to start taking advantage of the many ways Medicaid makes people's lives better while saving the state money and boosting the economy," Martin said. "Lawmakers should expand health coverage over Governor LePage's objections when they convene again in January."
