Employers Launch Grassroots Health Reform Coalition

Business groups from 20 states band together to support meaningful reform

PRNewswire
WASHINGTON

Twenty statewide chambers and employer organizations from around the country today announced an unprecedented alliance that will add their voice to the federal health care reform debate. The group, Employers for Quality Health Care, is an independent coalition that brings a unique perspective to the table alongside national business groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.

The members of the coalition -- representing thousands of employers who voluntarily provide coverage for millions of workers and their families -- outlined their priorities and suggestions for reform in a letter to President Obama and members of Congress.

"This coalition was created to enhance our members' grassroots advocacy on this critical issue," said George Israel, president of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. "We stand united in support of free-market reforms that promote choice and competition -- improving care, expanding coverage and reducing costs. We look forward to sharing real solutions with Congress, including many that have been effective in our own states.

"Health-related spending accounts for 17 percent of the nation's gross domestic product, and it's rising rapidly," said Joan Verplanck, president of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce. "If we don't get costs under control, the stress on our economy may be insurmountable. Reform is in everyone's interest, but it must be done smart and it must be done right."

"Our health care system is just too expensive right now for many reasons, and we have to reduce costs," said Don Brunell, president of the Association of Washington Business. "At AWB, we feel it like all small businesses when we attempt to budget health, dental and vision care for our 34 people. And we know our 6,600 member companies are also struggling to meet the needs of their employees. We need health care reform, but it must focus on private-sector solutions."

Along with the benefits of effective reform, several coalition members have first-hand experience with the consequences of poorly planned efforts. Massachusetts rushed through a major overhaul of its health care system in 2006 and now has the highest premiums in the nation.

"How can we expect to do for the nation what one state has not been able to do for its citizens?" asked Debra Boronski-Burack, president of the Massachusetts Chamber of Business & Industry. "Hasty action will impact our lives and the lives of our children's children in ways that we cannot begin to imagine."

The coalition opposes an employer mandate -- noting that most employers who can afford to provide health coverage already do so because it attracts and retains quality employees -- and new government-run coverage that would shift millions of Americans off their existing private plans.

In addition to legislative outreach, the coalition has launched a social media campaign to inform employers and employees about the federal health care reform effort. Follow the coalition online at www.employersforqualityhealthcare.org, on Facebook, or on Twitter (@stchmbrs4health).

About Employers for Quality Health CareProviding quality health care for employees and their families is one of the greatest challenges facing today's employers. The debate over health care reform in Congress has prompted state chambers and employer organizations in 20 states to form a coalition representing thousands of employers across the nation from family-owned businesses to Fortune 500 companies. Participants include:

-- Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce (Ark.)
-- Georgia Chamber of Commerce (Ga.)
-- Illinois Chamber of Commerce (Ill.)
-- Iowa Association of Business and Industry (Iowa)
-- Kansas Chamber of Commerce (Kan.)
-- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce (Ky.)
-- Massachusetts Chamber of Business and Industry (Mass.)
-- Michigan Chamber of Commerce (Mich.)
-- Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Mo.)
-- Montana Chamber of Commerce (Mont.)
-- New Jersey Chamber of Commerce (N.J.)
-- North Dakota Chamber of Commerce (N.D.)
-- Ohio Chamber of Commerce (Ohio)
-- State Chamber of Oklahoma (Okla.)
-- Associated Oregon Industries (Ore.)

-- Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry (Pa.)
-- Texas Association of Business (Texas)
-- Association of Washington Business (Wash.)
-- West Virginia Chamber of Commerce (W.Va.)

-- Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (Wis.)

Contact: Donna Steward
Office: 360.943.1600 ext. 1012
Mobile: 360.870.2919
DonnaS@awb.org

First Call Analyst:
FCMN Contact:

SOURCE: Employers for Quality Health Care

CONTACT: Donna Steward for Employers for Quality Health Care, Office: +1-360-943-1600 ext. 1012, Mobile: +1-360-870-2919, DonnaS@awb.org

Web Site: http://www.employersforqualityhealthcare.org/

---

https://michamber.mediaroom.com/index.php?s=19845&item=39636