



P. O. Box 1188
Montgomery, AL 36101
Street address: 207 Montgomery St. #900
(800) 832-9060; www.arisecitizens.org
Newsletter printed on recycled paper with 100%
post-consumer content

**Called membership
meeting Aug. 11**

Alabama voters face a difficult choice on Sept. 18.

As we outlined in our last newsletter, voters are being asked whether to remove \$437 million from the corpus of the Alabama Trust Fund that belongs to our children, or to place the General Fund Budget in peril, putting health care, mental health and social services at risk. The ACPD Board of Directors says the issue is so important that it should be put to a vote of the membership.

Members in good standing will determine Arise's position at a special membership meeting on Aug. 11 in Birmingham. At the board's direction, the Arise policy team has prepared the enclosed fact sheet on the issues under debate. Up-to-date member groups will cast ten votes and individual members who have donated between July 1, 2011, and June 30, 2012, will cast one.

ACPD Member Meeting 10:00-Noon, Sat., Aug. 11
Bluff Park United Methodist Church
733 Valley St.
Birmingham 35226

Directions: Exit I-65 at Alford Ave. Go west to end of Alford and turn left on Valley St. Church is on the left.

We need your voice!

Report

This newsletter made possible by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Vol. 15, No. 5

July 6, 2012

How will Alabama respond?

High court affirms health reform

By M. J. Ellington, health policy analyst

The victory celebration was sweet on June 28, the day the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Affordable Care Act (ACA), but advocates for better health care access in Alabama say their work is just beginning.

"In a high-poverty state like Alabama, the ACA provides tools to break the chain linking low income to poor health," ACPD executive director Kimble Forrister said. "Now we have to make sure Alabama takes full advantage of this historic opportunity." Alabama was one of 26 states that sued to overturn the ACA.

The high court's decision allows state leaders to opt out of a major component of the law – the expansion of Medicaid to low-income adults. Arise sees expanding Medicaid as a billion-dollar bargain Alabama can't afford to pass up.

The court affirmed the so-called "individual mandate," requiring uninsured adults not eligible for expanded Medicaid to purchase health insurance or pay a tax penalty. The federal government will offer premium subsidies on a sliding scale to help low- and middle-income consumers buy qualified plans in new online marketplaces called health insurance exchanges. Each state must create its own exchange or defer to a federal version. Alabama has moved aggressively on the technical changes needed to operate an exchange, but the required legislative action to authorize the exchange stalled this spring after Gov. Robert Bentley threatened a veto.

Nearly 750,000 Alabamians, including 100,000 children, lack health insurance. Alabama ranks high in numerous national measures of chronic health conditions and other health risks that insurance coverage could help reduce. The state also faces chronic shortages in revenue needed to fund state government and has resisted proposals for correcting the problem.

Another complication for Alabama is the shortage of health care providers, particularly in rural and low-income urban areas. As coverage expands, demand for primary care will rise. The ACA includes provisions to address the challenge, such as loan repayment and tax incentives for doctors in underserved areas and expanded opportunities for physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

As many as 500,000 non-elderly Alabamians with income up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level (about \$14,000 for an individual or \$29,000 for a family of four) would be eligible for Medicaid under the new rules. The federal government will pay the full cost of expansion for three years. Beginning in 2017, states will pay a small portion that rises to a cap of 10 percent in 2020.

Medicaid expansion – one of the chief complaints in the ACA lawsuit – would be an economic boost for Alabama, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Eligibility changes would bring \$10.3 billion in federal funds for Alabama's health care industry during the first six years, Kaiser estimates. To draw that amount, Alabama would need to

[Turn to Page 2]

**A few words
from Kimble —**

At stake on Sept. 18 are fundamental values on both sides. For many years our work for tax reform has been guided by a search for a fair, adequate, simple and transparent tax system. As a matter of principle, we think this generation should pay its own bills, paying enough in taxes to support the common good – not raid the piggy bank that belongs to our children’s children. But we’re also alarmed that our leaders are taking us to the edge of a precipice, as illustrated by the House vote for a budget that cut Medicaid to a level that could have ended the program, forcing closure of hospitals and the loss of billions in federal health care funding.

If voters approve the raid on the piggy bank, we buy time to build support for new revenue to pay our health care bill, but we also set a precedent for further raids on the Alabama Trust Fund. If voters turn the measure down, Gov. Bentley will likely call a special session of the Legislature to decide whether to increase taxes or impose drastic cuts for the budget year that begins Oct. 1. The critical question is, faced with disaster, can lawmakers be persuaded to increase revenue for the General Fund? Remember, there won’t be time for a referendum to increase property or income taxes in the 12 days between Sept. 18 and Oct. 1.

With peace,

Kimble Forrister, executive director

Court upholds ACA

[Continued from Page 1]

contribute only \$470 million in state funding during the same six-year period.

Alabamians are already enjoying a number of the ACA’s benefits. For example, insurance companies can no longer deny coverage to children with pre-existing conditions or impose lifetime caps on benefits. Young adults can stay on their parents’ plans

until age 26. And seniors can get free preventive care. Beginning in 2014, no one can be denied coverage for a pre-existing condition, and annual benefit limits will end.

“The more people learn about the ACA, the more they like it,” Forrister said. “It’s our job to spread the word, so Alabamians can let their leaders know what we all stand to gain.”

To schedule an ACA workshop in your area, contact Dollie Hambrick: dollie@alarise.org or (800) 832-9060.

Thank you for your support!

Arise Citizens’ Policy Project thanks the following donors for their contributions received between May 6 and June 15, 2012:

Greater Birmingham Alliance to Stop Pollution (GASP), Birmingham
Ellen Abell, Auburn
Rev. Diana Jordan Allende, Opelika
Benjamin & Helen Benford, Montgomery
Luanne Biles, Huntsville
Brenda & Jerry Boman, Notasulga
Joel Brouwer, Tuscaloosa
Hank Caddell, Mobile
Jim Carnes & Erin Kellen, Montgomery
Sally Cauthen, Duxbury, Mass.
Janet Clark, Auburn
John Cleverdon, Point Clear
Anne Cody, Anniston
Joan Colburn, Auburn
Paula Copeland, Birmingham
Emily Cosby, West Point, Ga.
Evan Coutts, Washington, D.C.
Robert Cowan, Montevallo
Saradell Crawford, San Antonio, Texas
Edith Davis, Montgomery
Carmine & Susan Di Biase, Jacksonville
Lynn Douglas, Birmingham
Tom & Doreen Duley, Birmingham
Robert & Franciska Dyck, Birmingham
Coke & MJ Ellington, Montgomery
Butch Ferrell, Birmingham
Kimble Forrister & Calli Patterson, Montgomery
William Giardini, Brownsboro
Ron Gilbert, Douglasville, Ga.
Barbara Grant, Montgomery
Gwendolyn Gray, Montgomery
Carol Gundlach, Shorter
Ruth Gynther, Auburn
Dollie Hambrick, Montgomery
Presdelane Harris, Montgomery
Jack & Heidi Hataway, Montgomery

Bobbie & Aleta Henderson, Phenix City
Lawton & Nancy Higgs, Bessemer
Peter Horn, Birmingham
Rebecca Jackson, Montgomery
Stan & Gracie Johnson, Birmingham
Shakita Jones, Wetumpka
M. Javed Khan, Auburn
Judith Lechner, Auburn
Gary Orlando Lewis, Gadsden
George & Betty Likis, Birmingham
Kathleen Liles, Birmingham
Gwendolyn Lipscomb, Montgomery
Zeb Little, Cullman
R.G. Lyons, Birmingham
Ron Manning, Brierfield
Marjorie Masterson, Huntsville
Kathy McMullen, Birmingham
Mary McPhillips, Birmingham
Lawrence & Julia Morgan, Auburn
John & Melissa Oliver, Dadeville
Mary Lynn & Walter Porter, Dadeville
Jackie Posey, Town Creek
Hiram J. Powell, Auburn
Anna Merrill Pritchett, Montgomery
Amelie Ratliff, Jamaica Plain, Mass.
Jerome R. Redus, Huntsville
Paul M. Rilling, Anniston
Helen Rivas, Birmingham
Teresa Rodriguez, Auburn
Ted & Becky Romano, Orange Beach
Judy Roy, Bessemer
Isabel & Sigfredo Rubio, Birmingham
Anne G. Rutledge, Huntsville
Dick Sales, Birmingham
Peggy Sanders, Auburn
Kristina Scott, Birmingham
Josh & Quin Segall, Montgomery
J. Wayne Sellers, Guntersville
Ruthie Sherrill, Tuscaloosa
Pat Siano, Foley
Maude Simmons, Birmingham
Rita Judge Smith, Anniston
Esta Spector, Jacksonville
Lucille Stand, Auburn
Micki Beth Stiller, Montgomery
Teresa Thorne, Springville
Mamie Van Dyke, Birmingham
Jim Vickrey, Montgomery
Connie Wagnon, Birmingham
Katherine & Warren Weed, Birmingham
Gerald & Carol Wheelock, Huntsville
Lorna Wiggins, Auburn
Lynne Wilbanks, Houston, Texas
Ray & Freda Winegar, Arley
Carol & Ralph Womer, Auburn
James Woodson, Tuscaloosa
Ruth L. Wright, Auburn
Bette Yeager, New Hope
Carole B. Zugazaga, Auburn