This Week in Health Policy...

- Individual Mandate
- Health Care Innovation Challenge!
- C.R. to Keep Funding for Health Care
- Health Care Premiums Rise Nationwide
The **United States Supreme Court** will hear arguments within the next few months regarding whether or not the *individual responsibility* provision of the Affordable Care Act is unconstitutional. They could either: **uphold the entire law; strike down the mandate and uphold the rest of the law; or defer the decision until after the mandate is implemented in 2014.** More details are available [here](#).

Photo credit: U.S. Supreme Court
Health System Reform:
Expanding the Workforce

This week, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced the Health Care Innovation Challenge, aimed at improving the nation’s healthcare workforce, and amplifying the impact of non-physicians such as clinic managers or community health workers. The health care sector grew by more than 300,000 jobs in 2010. More details are available here.

**Highlights:**

- US facing physician shortage
- Problem will become more acute in 2014
- $1B available for the Challenge

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Photo credit: Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation
This week, Congress released the Conference Report on H.R. 2112, the Fiscal Year 2012 Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act. Also known as the “Mini-bus”, this package contains FY 2012 funding for six vital government functions. It also includes a Continuing Resolution (CR) designed to keep the rest of the federal government (including health care services) operating at FY 2011 levels until December 16, 2011. More details here.

Image credit: Microsoft Images
Health System Reform: Rising Health Care Premiums

This week, The Commonwealth Fund reported rising health care premiums for employers and families over the last several years. These increased costs endanger the well-being of families nationwide, since many will be forced to postpone needed care, thus jeopardizing their health status. Various provisions of the Affordable Care Act, such as health insurance exchanges, should repair the distortions in the insurance market that contribute to these trends. Study details here.

Highlights (data from 2003-2010):

• Total premiums for family coverage - up 50%
• Employees’ share of premiums - up 63%
• Premiums consume 20% or more of family income in 24 states
• Per-person deductibles doubled among large and small employers
What You Can Do

• Please call your Members of Congress, and urge them to preserve funding for Medicare and Medicaid. Contact info here.

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