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Supreme Court Health Care Subsidies Decision: What Kansans Should Know

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The U.S. Supreme Court ruled yesterday on the case *King v. Burwell* in favor of Burwell, which confirmed the use of advance premium tax credits for health insurance consumers in all states, including Kansas. The premium tax credits provide financial assistance to consumers, based on their income, to make health insurance more affordable.

“The decision allows more than 70,000 Kansas residents to continue receiving their federal financial subsidies for their health insurance plans purchased through the Kansas Health Insurance Marketplace,” said Roberta Riportella, Kansas Health Foundation professor of community health through K-State Research and Extension. She added that more than six million people throughout the United States will continue to receive these subsidies due to the June 25 decision.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (<http://www.cms.gov/>), consumers in every state who are enrolled in health insurance through the marketplace will continue to be eligible for a premium tax credit, which lowers the average consumer’s health insurance costs by \$272 each month. That means \$3,264 in savings, on average, per consumer each year. About eight out of every 10 consumers could find coverage for \$100 or less with tax credits through the marketplace.

While 14 U.S. states currently operate a state-based marketplace, the 36 other states—including Kansas—opted for state-partnership, federally supported or federally facilitated marketplaces for their citizens (<http://kff.org/health-reform/state-indicator/state-health-insurance-marketplace-types/>).

The Supreme Court case questioned wording in President Barack Obama’s health care law, also called the Affordable Care Act (ACA), to determine if subsidies should only be available to people buying health insurance in a marketplace established by their state. Riportella said the 6-to-3 ruling solidified that Congress’ intention by the ACA was to make financial assistance available to all consumers, regardless of the states in which they live, or whether or not their states made decisions to create their own marketplace.

Signing up for health insurance

Even as the next open enrollment for the marketplace won’t be until November of this year, individuals might still be eligible to sign up for insurance now, Riportella said. Individuals who have changes in life status that might include loss of job-based insurance, addition of family member, change in citizen status, or a move to a new state, as examples, could be eligible to enroll in health insurance in a marketplace plan within 60 days of the qualifying event.

Many who purchase health insurance in the marketplace will also be eligible for financial assistance, she said. If a consumer is uninsured, he or she can call the marketplace at 800-318-2596 to ask about qualifying to enroll in coverage now. Health insurance assisters are available in Kansas to answer questions and help people access health insurance. A local support person can be found at <http://insureks.org/allagents.php?mode=county>.

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K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus, Manhattan.

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