

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

For Immediate Release
December 26, 2017

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Hits and Misses for Health Freedom in 2017's Top Headlines

Citizens' Council for Health Freedom: From Failed Obamacare Repeal to Zeroing Out ACA's Individual Mandate Penalty, 2017 Was a Landmark Year for Health Care Policy

ST. PAUL, Minn.—This past year was certainly eventful when it came to headlines that shaped the health care landscape. In fulfilling its mission to educate and engage Americans about health care policies that affect them personally, *Citizens' Council for Health Freedom (CCHF, www.cchfreedom.org)* has been a voice of support or opposition, depending on the proposed statutory and regulatory revisions.

CCHF president and co-founder Twila Brase says the following are some of the top 2017 health care policies in the news that will impact Americans the most (with links to a *CCHF* news release on the topic):

NEW ERA OF DEREGULATION?

President Donald Trump made many health care-related promises during his campaign and leading up to the election. Since his Inauguration Day, Trump has shown an executive-level commitment to health freedom by issuing executive orders to free citizens, patients and doctors from the bureaucratic burdens that have been compromising care and causing costs to skyrocket.

[Read more from *CCHF*...](#)

The Trump administration also vowed to deregulate the health care industry with the help of Health and Human Services leadership, which changed hands in late September when former HHS Secretary Tom Price resigned. Trump has nominated pharmaceutical executive and conservative lawyer Alex Azar for the post. Brase says 2018 will demonstrate whether Azar continues the trend of deregulation.

[Read more from *CCHF*...](#)

FAILURE TO REPEAL THE ACA

Republicans have control of the Senate, House and White House, but after repeated attempts, couldn't pull the trigger on several Affordable Care Act repeal and replace efforts.

The American Health Care Act (AHCA), the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA), "skinny repeal" and the Graham-Cassidy bill wasted time and would not have repealed the entire ACA, Brase said. Despite a lot of talk, GOP leadership didn't even try to fulfill the many campaign promises to repeal the law.

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BATTLE OVER BAILOUT SUBSIDIES

In addition to pushing for repeal of Obamacare, **CCHF** supported President Trump's call to end payment of illegal cost-sharing reduction (CSR) payments. Stopping the payments would contribute to the much-needed implosion of the Affordable Care Act, Brase said. Trump stopped CSR payments to health plans in October.

But last month, the Senate announced it would bring the Obamacare "stability" legislation written by Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) to the floor for a vote. This legislation, Brase says, will legalize CSR subsidies, allowing health plans to pocket even more money and will not restore health freedom to Americans. Judge Vince Chabria, who heard the CSR lawsuit against the Trump administration, warned that health plans would be able to "double collect" due to higher premiums the plans are already charging in expectation of losing the subsidies.

"The expected double-dipping of taxpayer dollars under a congressional bailout must not be authorized," Brase said. "The taxpayer already hit with high premiums is facing higher taxes as a result of the billions in CSR subsidies that should never have been paid by the administration. Congress should not give health plans a second stream of annual access to taxpayer dollars through CSR subsidies."

[Read more from CCHF...](#)

ZERO-ING OUT INDIVIDUAL MANDATE PENALTY

Just last week, Congress finalized the historic tax reform bill, which addressed the unfair and coercive Obamacare individual mandate. **CCHF** applauded lawmakers for taking action to eliminate the Affordable Care Act penalty on people who cannot afford private insurance or do not want public coverage. Brase noted, however, that neither the mandate nor the penalty language are actually repealed. Rather, the penalty on individuals is simply zeroed out, potentially allowing another Congress to easily restore the penalty to the same or higher level. Furthermore, the law does not zero out the penalty until Jan. 1, 2019.

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FINAL COMMON RULE VS. PARENTAL RIGHTS

Since taking office, President Trump has wisely put a hold on the revised Common Rule for federally funded research, which was published by the Obama administration on Jan. 19, 2017, the day before Trump's inauguration, with implementation scheduled for a year later in January 2018. The White House is planning to delay implementation another year, until January 2019, but that change does not sufficiently address the use of newborn DNA without parental consent, which will be reauthorized if the rule is finalized without additional requirements, **CCHF** informed the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

"Our organization discovered the state-based 'Baby DNA Warehousing' issue in 2003," Brase wrote in a letter to OMB leadership. "As a result, four parent lawsuits (one in Indiana, one in Minnesota and two in Texas) have been filed, and judges have required millions of newborn DNA blood spot cards stored by state government to be incinerated. ... Most parents, in the fog and exhaustion of labor and delivery, do not realize that: 1) newborn screening is a state government program, 2) the blood from the newborn heel prick is sent to the state public health laboratory, and 3) many states are storing, using and disseminating the DNA without parental consent, including for genetic research."

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ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF ‘THE WEDGE OF HEALTH FREEDOM’

In June 2016, *CCHF* unveiled an innovative new initiative to restore health freedom, for both patients and doctors, and free patients from third-party intrusion. *CCHF* marked the one-year anniversary of *The Wedge of Health Freedom*® (www.JointheWedge.com) this past summer, and today approximately [225 medical practices](#) in nearly every state in the country are participating. *The Wedge* is a free-trade zone using direct payment (cash, check or charge) to transform the entire health care system back to freedom with the added benefits of simplicity, affordability, confidentiality and patient-centeredness.

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