

## The Affordable Care Act and Small Business

By Alexis Taylor  
Special to NNPA from the Afro

“Right now my employees don’t have healthcare,” said William F. Wingo, president of Power Magazine. “I had healthcare for them, but it just became too expensive,” said Wingo, who for years provided benefits for employees of the Christian monthly that is circulated in the Baltimore and Washington D.C. areas.

“Business was booming in the publishing industry so I could afford it at that time. Everything kind of turned upside down and we just didn’t have the means to afford it.”

nities for Small, Minority and Women-owned Businesses forum, which was held by the President’s Roundtable (PRT) and REACH Foundation.

The forum presented a panel that included healthcare industry leaders such as Chester Burrell, President and CEO of CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, Rebecca Pearce, Executive Director of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, and Thomas Kim, Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Also present was Maryland Lt. Governor, Anthony G. Brown and Secretary of the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, Christian Johanson.

“The Affordable Care Act is large and seemingly complex,” said Maria Beckett, leader of the President’s Roundtable, an organization made up of key entrepreneurs looking to advance minority business. “We really want to focus on the opportunities,” said Beckett, shortly before beginning the session.

By far one of the most critical pieces of law signed into legislation under the Obama administration, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) partly went into effect on March 23, 2010.

Under the PPACA, tax credits for nearly 4 million small businesses have become available. Already in effect, the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit incentive covers up to 35 percent of the health care costs incurred by employers. The credit can also be applied to insurance costs for small

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Like many entrepreneurs nationwide, Wingo found himself unable to offer health benefits to the workers that have helped grow his company over the past 22 years.

“If you want to keep your employees you have to give them healthcare. Hopefully, the Affordable Care Act will enable us to do that.”

Wingo was one of several minority business owners that gathered for The Affordable Care Act: Impact and Opportu-



PHOTO COURTESY WILLIAM WINGO

Rev. William F. Wingo and Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley. Wingo says the Affordable Health Care Act could be crucial to his business.

non-profit organizations, with those that are eligible receiving a 25 percent discount.

The legislation will take effect in stages and by 2015 all sections of the PPACA will be in place.

By that time, eligible business owners could have up to half of their health insurance expenses covered, with non-profits receiving 35 percent off.

Though benefiting some, opponents of the law say the tax credits are temporary and do nothing longterm for the larger number of small businesses that do not meet requirements.

“The exemptions are written very narrowly so the vast majority of small business owners don’t qualify for it,” said Jack Mozloom, senior representative for the National Federation of Independent Businesses, the organization that expressed their qualms about the law in court last month.

“Many of the organizations that got waivers from the federal law were big unions. Our members are small little mom and pop businesses that don’t have that kind of political clout so they can’t get the waivers.”

The NFIB believes the law to be unconstitutional because small businesses should be able to buy insurance from whatever state they want, at the price they want, from whatever company they see fit.

To date, 26 states have joined with Florida to file a multi-state suit, with Virginia

and Oklahoma filing independent motions.

Supreme Court justices began hearing arguments on March 26 to decide whether to keep the portion of the bill that mandates all Americans have health insurance by 2014 or pay a penalty, which would be collected in the same manner as taxes.

“Sometimes, Congress writes laws in such a way that the laws can stand even if one provision is removed, but that isn’t what happened with the president’s health-care law,” said President and CEO of the National Federation of Independent Business, Dan Danner in a statement.

“It was written in such a way that it’s all or nothing. If the Supreme Court agrees that the provision requiring people to buy health insurance or pay a penalty is unconstitutional, then the entire health-care law collapses.”

Both proponents for the law and those against it say if the insurance mandate is struck down, other portions of the law-if not all of it- must die with too. Mozloom says the other portions of the law can’t stand alone because they are paid for with funds generated from the individual insurance mandate.

Still, others see no reason to do away with the numerous benefits that both sides agree on and Americans on Main Street desperately need.

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