

Health Industry Invests In States

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HEADLINE: Health industry invests in states; That's where next battles over revamp to be fought

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WASHINGTON -- The next battles over President Obama's sweeping revamp of the nation's health care system will be waged in the states -- where health care interests are heavily invested.

Six of the 15 attorneys general who have challenged the new law count health care interests among the top five industries giving to their most recent campaigns, according to the non-partisan National Institute on Money in State Politics.

Other examples:

*In 2009, health care companies made up four of the top 10 givers to the Democratic Governors Association and three in the top 10 to the Republican Governors Association. Health interests donated more than \$4.2 million to the DGA and \$3.9 million to the RGA, which are working to elect 37 governors this fall, a USA TODAY analysis shows.

*Health care companies and their workers spent \$116.7 million on state races in 2008, almost as much as the \$167.2 million that went to federal races from health care interests.

*The American Legislative Exchange Council, a group of state lawmakers pushing model bills "to stop ObamaCare at the state line," counts health care executives among its top members.

"All of these companies know that they are not involved in just one health care debate," said Edwin Bender, the national institute's executive director. "They have to be players at the state and the federal level." States will play a big role in implementing the health care law, which will expand Medicaid -- the federal-state program for the poor and disabled -- and will require states to create exchanges for individuals to compare and buy coverage.

The financial burden of expanding Medicaid is a top concern of 14 attorneys general who filed a multistate lawsuit challenging the health care law Obama signed into law last month. Among them, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott received the most from health care groups, taking in more than \$415,000 in his 2006 campaign. Virginia Attorney General Kenneth Cuccinelli has filed a separate suit.

Jason Johnson, an Abbott campaign spokesman, said there's no link between donations and official actions. Given the profits health companies will reap from the new law, "if anything, I would expect these individuals to demand their contributions be returned," he said.

The American Legislative Exchange Council includes five drug and insurance company executives on its private enterprise board. The council's Christie Herrera said it's common for industries to join such

groups.

*Obama: Give health care law a chance, 5A

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