

New Health Care Law May Inadvertently Hurt Congress

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New health care law may inadvertently hurt Congress

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It is often said the new health care law will affect almost every American in some way.

And, perhaps fittingly if unintentionally, no one may be more affected than members of Congress themselves.

In a new report, the Congressional Research Service says the law may have significant unintended consequences for the "personal health insurance coverage" of senators, representatives and their staff members.

For example, it says, the law may "remove members of Congress and congressional staff" from their current coverage in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program before any alternatives are available.

The confusion raises the inevitable question: If they did not know exactly what they were doing to themselves, did lawmakers who wrote and passed the bill fully grasp the details of how it would influence the lives of other Americans?

The law promises that people can keep coverage they like, largely unchanged. For members of Congress and their aides, the federal employees health program offers much to like. But, the report says, the men and women who wrote the law may find that the guarantee of stability does not apply to them.

"It is unclear whether members of Congress and congressional staff who are currently participating in FEHBP may be able to retain this coverage," the research service said in an 8,100-word memorandum.

The federal employees program, created in 1959, now provides coverage to 8 million people and, according to the Congressional Research Service, is the largest employer-sponsored health insurance program in the country. unclear coverage

One example of the confusion over the new health care law is that senators, representatives and their

staff members could lose coverage in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program before alternative plans become available.

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