

GeorgiaWatch

Protecting Consumers, Promoting Transparency, Empowering Citizens

The Watcher: The newsletter of Georgia Watch, the state's leading consumer watchdog

Governor Deal says no to Medicaid expansion **By Bill Rencher, JD, MPH** **Director, Health Access Program**

On June 28, 2012, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was constitutional, except for the portion that required states to expand their Medicaid programs, effectively making that expansion optional. At that time, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal took a pragmatic approach and stated that Georgia would wait and see whether expanding the state's Medicaid program would be the most prudent course of action for the state. Therefore, we were surprised on August 28 when Governor Deal, attending the Republican National Convention in Tampa, stated that he was opposed to the Medicaid expansion and that he did not foresee Georgia taking part. This new position stands in contrast to the pragmatic approach he took back in June and that he has taken to many other policy issues since becoming governor.

We believe the Medicaid expansion is good for Georgia consumers—all Georgia consumers. The program would obviously benefit the 650,000 uninsured adults who would qualify for coverage. However, the expansion would also benefit Georgia consumers who have insurance, because they indirectly support the uninsured through higher health care costs and insurance premiums. In fact, not expanding Medicaid would represent a double cost to the state's insured consumers: they would continue to pay higher costs to support care for the uninsured, and their federal tax dollars would go to pay for Medicaid expansions in other states, such as California and Maryland.

Governor Deal cited these reasons, along with the upcoming presidential election, at his post Supreme Court decision press conference when he advocated a "wait and see" approach to Medicaid expansion in Georgia. We are hopeful that Governor

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Clark Howard says to save the date!



For the past ten years, Georgia Watch has represented your interests, not special interests.

To celebrate this achievement **we're having a 10th anniversary gala on Thursday, October 18, from 6:00-8:00PM at the home of Georgia Watch board member Clark Howard.**

Invitations to this fundraising event will go out soon. Your ticket purchases will enable Georgia Watch to continue doing our important work for you.

Deal's latest comments are merely evidence of an evolving position on this issue and that he will continue to look at all the facts and make a decision that is best for all of Georgia consumers. In the meantime, Georgia Watch will continue its work with other health advocates to encourage the Governor, state leaders, and voters to support expanding the Medicaid program in Georgia.

We're pleased to see progress on ethics reform

By Elena Parent, JD
Executive Director

As a member of the Georgia Alliance for Ethics Reform, we continue working toward the implementation of government reforms to protect consumers and everyday Georgians. During the primary elections, Georgia voters overwhelmingly voiced their support for meaningful ethics reform at the State Capitol. Elected officials are responding, notably including House Speaker David Ralston. Georgia Watch is pleased to see progress on this issue and we applaud the Speaker for his leadership.

Two interesting opinion editorials on ethics reform, by former Secretary of State Karen Handel and Common Cause Executive Director William Perry, appeared in the Atlanta Journal Constitution on August 23. We encourage you to learn more about this issue and the debate by [reading them here](#).

Update on Grassroots Outreach Events

By Karla Johnson
Grassroots Coordinator

Yesterday, Georgia Watch attended the annual meeting of Piece by Piece, A Regional Foreclosure Initiative. Keynote speaker Maurice Jones, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, shared information about the Independent Foreclosure Review. This government program may be able to provide financial compensation to homeowners who were involved in a foreclosure between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2010. Homeowners may be eligible for an Independent Foreclosure Review to determine if they suffered financial damages due to errors and deficiencies made during their foreclosure process. Homeowners who believe they were victims of unfair foreclosures can call the toll-free number at 1-888-952-9105 or visit [here](#) to apply for an Independent Foreclosure Review. The deadline for applying for an Independent Foreclosure Review is December 31, 2012.

In the past few months, Georgia Watch has had many great opportunities to educate and interact with consumers on multiple issues, including identity theft and predatory lending. However, our

As Clark says, Georgia Watch is "the only bona fide group in Georgia looking out for consumers" and a donation to Georgia Watch is "double the bang for your buck, because you're helping a great organization that's working for you *and* you get savings back on your income tax."

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recent outreach events have focused primarily on preventing home foreclosure. We shared information about preventing home foreclosure with dozens of consumers and civic organizations, including the Albany Golden K Kiwanis Club, the Fayette Daybreak Rotary Club and attendees of Neighborhood Planning Units in Atlanta and during a Stand-Up Alliance Town Hall meeting. Attendees benefited by receiving helpful tips on avoiding foreclosure, such as warning against foreclosure scams that claim to “rescue” homeowners from foreclosure and counseling agencies that are not HUD-approved.



Georgia Watch is committed to educating consumers about avoiding foreclosures and locating resources to help Georgia families stay in their homes. If you would like Georgia Watch to speak to your group about foreclosure or any of the consumer issues we monitor, please contact Karla Johnson at kjohnson@georgiawatch.org.

Please visit our website at www.GeorgiaWatch.org and www.GaHAP.org