



# JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE / JACL

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## The Health Care Bill and the Asian American Community

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization, applauds the House of Representatives and the White House Administration for passing the Senate version of the health care bill along with the reconciliation bill late Sunday night. Today, the President signed the Health Insurance Reform Bill that will allow the U.S. Senate to take up the bill and offer their amendments to finalize the whole package. As 32 million more Americans will be covered, the bill will also reduce the federal deficit by \$130 billion over the next ten years.

Besides the main areas of reform such as eliminating discrimination against pre-existing conditions, closing the Medicare Part-D Drug coverage donut hole, allowing youth to be covered by their parents until their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday, and more preventative care measures, the following are measures in the bill that are particularly important to the Asian American Pacific Islander Community (AAPI):

- **INCREASED DATA COLLECTION** – As an undercounted and underserved population, it is critical to have more research and data collected on the AAPI community.
- **CULTURAL AND LINGUISTICAL TRAINING FOR CERTAIN HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS** – Having more culturally and linguistically competent health care professionals will help to provide more quality and efficient care to the AAPI community, especially when one of the biggest barriers for certain AAPI groups includes linguistic capabilities.
- **INCREASED FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS** – Community health centers are important because they are culturally and linguistically sensitive, and can provide a great support system to the AAPI community.
- **MORE TAX CREDITS AND EXPANSION OF MEDICAID TO 133% FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL (FPL)** – With almost three-quarters of Asian Americans surveyed in the 2009 Current Population Survey having personal incomes under 400% of FPL, the expansion of Medicaid will tremendously help with health care affordability. Tax credits are not only for individuals and families, but also for small businesses which is a huge aspect of the AAPI community. According to the 2002 Economic Census, there were 1.1 million Asian American-owned businesses, generating more than \$326 billion in revenue.

- **INCREASED MEDICAID AND FEDERAL MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PERCENTAGE (FMAP) FOR U.S TERRITORIES** – Medicaid is known to be a vital source of health care for low-income families, and the expansion of the program would greatly assist the U.S Territories since nearly one in four Southeast Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders live in poverty.

Although the JACL commends the above measures, it is disappointing that the 5-year waiting period for legal immigrants to receive any Medicaid assistance was not lifted. In addition, the insurance Exchange will have discriminatory and burdensome citizenship verification processes for immigrants which will prevent access to health care. These measures create barriers and make it difficult for some of the AAPI community to be able to afford and have access to health care. Individuals would have to wait until their medical condition really worsens and this should never be the case. The JACL has worked closely with members of Congress and the White House Administration during this long fought battle for health care, and will continue to work with them to see that the bill's provisions are implemented efficiently.