

Liberal group rips Taylor, touts health law

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By David Eggert

On the first anniversary of children no longer being denied health insurance for pre-existing conditions, a liberal policy group denounced Republican Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor for her “drumbeat” of criticism against the federal health-care law.

The Patient Bill of Rights, a part of the Affordable Care Act championed by President Barack Obama, took effect on Sept. 23, 2010. Major provisions of the law — such as the individual requirement to buy health insurance — don’t start until 2014.

“We have millions of Ohioans that are reaping some pretty clear benefits from the Patient Bill of Rights,” Innovation Ohio spokesman Dale Butland said yesterday. “You would think, as the state insurance commissioner, Mary Taylor would be very happy about many of these consumer protections.”

Taylor this week released a report that says health insurance premiums could increase by as much as 150 percent in 2014. She said, “‘Obamacare’ will result in bigger government, unsustainable costs and ultimately, less consumer choice.”

Innovation Ohio released its own report yesterday showing the impact of some of the more-popular parts of the law that already are in place:

- Insurance companies can’t deny coverage to 643,000 Ohio children with pre-existing conditions.
- Parents can keep children on their policies until age 26, a benefit to 40,000 Ohio residents.
- Insurers must spend more of their premium dollars on medical care.
- About 147,000 small businesses in Ohio qualify for a tax credit because they pay more for employee health coverage than large companies do.

Susan Verble, Taylor’s deputy chief of staff, said the report done for the Department of Insurance by Milliman Inc. “speaks for itself” — showing premiums are going to go up for individuals and small-business owners.

“For the first time since ‘Obamacare’ was signed into law, we have an independent assessment by professionals in the health-care field of the law’s impact on Ohio’s insurance market and consumers,” Verble said.

Innovation Ohio officials, however, accused Taylor of cherry-picking from the report, which also found that costs could fall as much as 40 percent.

They argued that subsidies and mandated insurance will help control overall health costs, and they criticized Taylor for claiming the federal law will destroy Ohio's competitive insurance market.

Butland noted that 41 percent of the state's market already is controlled by one company, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

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