

UPDATE

neurosurgery

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Supreme Court Ruling on *King v. Burwell* Paves the Way to Fix Affordable Care Act *Neurosurgeons Urge Congress to Adopt Changes to Improve Health Reform Law*

Washington, DC—While today’s U.S. Supreme Court decision in *King v. Burwell* settles the legal debate on the lawfulness of federal tax subsidies for individuals enrolled in federal health insurance exchanges, many problems with the Affordable Care Act (ACA) remain. Far from the last word on healthcare reform, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) are redoubling their efforts to work with Congress to move forward and fix the shortcomings of the health reform law.

“Despite the resolution of the insurance subsidy issue, Congress must take action to address the many broken promises of health reform,” said AANS president, H. Hunt Batjer, MD, a neurosurgeon from Dallas, Texas.

These broken promises include:

- Healthcare costs continue to rise, and notwithstanding President Obama’s assurances, consumers continue to face double-digit premium increases and unaffordable deductibles.
- Despite covering more individuals, the number of uninsured remains high, and approximately 30 million Americans still lack insurance coverage.
- The majority of insurance coverage comes from enrolling individuals into Medicaid, which has well-documented access to care problems.
- Millions of consumers lost the health plan that they liked, and their choice of healthcare plans and providers have been significantly curtailed.

“True healthcare reform must include practical, common-sense solutions, which will lower costs, strengthen the patient-doctor relationship and protect access to high-quality neurosurgical care for our patients,” said CNS president, Nathan R. Selden, MD, PhD, a neurosurgeon from Portland, Ore.

The AANS and CNS are recommending that Congress take the following steps to improve the ACA:

- Increase consumer choice beyond the current government mandated plans, by allowing individuals to choose plans such as health savings accounts.
- Eliminate burdensome regulations due to mandates like the electronic health record (EHR) meaningful use program, Physician Quality Reporting System (PQRS) and the Value-Based Payment Modifier — which only seek to further penalize healthcare providers without leading to improved quality of care.
- Ensure access to care for our Nation’s seniors by repealing the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB).
- Preserve medical innovation by eliminating the medical device tax.
- Expand Medicare support for graduate medical education (GME) to ensure an appropriate supply of well-educated and trained are available to provide access to quality healthcare services for all Americans.

“As we have from the beginning of the healthcare reform debate, America’s neurosurgeons stand ready to work with policymakers to improve our healthcare system,” Dr. Batjer avowed.

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The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), founded in 1931, and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS), founded in 1951, are the two largest scientific and educational associations for neurosurgical professionals in the world. These groups represent over 8,000 neurosurgeons worldwide. Neurological surgery is the medical specialty concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of disorders that affect the entire nervous system, including the spinal column, spinal cord, brain and peripheral nerves. For more information, please visit www.aans.org or www.cns.org or www.neurosurgeryblog.org.