



What's at Stake

How the U.S. Supreme Court Could Force More Iowans to Go Without Health Coverage

February 4, 2015

On March 4, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear *King v. Burwell*, a lawsuit that seeks to strip premium tax credits from people who live in states with a federal insurance marketplace under the Affordable Care Act, or ACA. Repealing this pillar of the law, which helps make health coverage more affordable for consumers, would have severe consequences.

The stakes could not be higher. The sudden elimination of a key component of the ACA would cause substantial disruptions to the U.S. health care system. Moreover, it would take away health insurance coverage from more than 8 million Americans and cause premiums to spike for millions more. In Iowa alone, nearly 100,000 people would lose an average of \$2,940 in tax credits and cost-sharing reductions, with many of these people losing their insurance entirely.¹ All told, 90,000 Iowans would become uninsured.²

This court decision has the potential to upend the health care system at the same time that the Affordable Care Act is working. In Iowa alone, nearly 40,000 people³ have coverage through its federal marketplace, and 86 percent of those enrollees have received financial assistance.⁴

Repealing tax credits would cause widespread turmoil in the health care system

If the U.S. Supreme Court were to rule in favor of the plaintiffs in the *King v. Burwell* case:

- **Ninety thousand Iowans would lose their insurance.** According to the Urban Institute, 90,000 Iowans would be unable to afford their health insurance coverage and would become uninsured if the U.S. Supreme Court repeals the tax credits available under the Affordable Care Act in the federal marketplaces.⁵



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- **Overall, nearly 100,000 Iowans would lose an average of \$2,940 in tax credits and cost-sharing reductions.** According to the Urban Institute, 98,000 people would lose an average of \$2,940 in tax credits and cost-sharing reductions—a total of \$289 million—if the U.S. Supreme Court rules in favor of the plaintiffs.⁶

The Affordable Care Act is working: Tax credits help lower the cost of premiums for Iowans

- **Nearly 40,000 Iowans have selected a marketplace plan.** As of January 16, 2015, 36,718 Iowans have selected a marketplace plan.⁷
- **Eighty-six percent of Iowans who selected a marketplace plan received financial assistance.** As of January 2015, 86 percent of Iowans who selected a plan in the federal marketplace received financial assistance to help lower the cost of their health coverage.⁸

Endnotes

1 Linda J. Blumberg, Matthew Buettgens, and John Holahan, "The Implications of a Supreme Court Finding for the Plaintiff in King vs. Burwell" (Washington: Urban Institute, 2015), available at <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/2000062-The-Implications-King-vs-Burwell.pdf>.

2 Ibid.

3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Open Enrollment Week 9: January 10, 2015 – January 16, 2015," January 21, 2015, available at <http://www.hhs.gov/health-care/facts/blog/2015/01/open-enrollment-week-nine.html>.

4 Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, "Health Insurance Marketplace 2015 Open Enrollment Period: January Enrollment Report" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2015/marketplaceenrollment/jan2015/ib_2015jan_enrollment.pdf.

5 Blumberg, Buettgens, and Holahan, "The Implications of a Supreme Court Finding for the Plaintiff in King vs. Burwell."

6 Ibid.

7 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Open Enrollment Week 9: January 10, 2015 – January 16, 2015."

8 Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, "Health Insurance Marketplace 2015 Open Enrollment Period: January Enrollment Report."

9 Dan Witters, "Arkansas, Kentucky Report Sharpest Drops in Uninsured Rate," Gallup, August 5, 2014, available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/174290/arkansas-kentucky-report-sharpest-drops-uninsured-rate.aspx>.