



The National Organization of Portuguese Americans

Legislative Alert ©

April 5, 2010

As a part of NOPA's mission to empower Portuguese-Americans, this Legislative Alert is sent out every two weeks as pertinent developments occur in order to keep the community informed of legislative action at the national level. This objective, non-partisan report aims to educate those interested about action on Capitol Hill that may affect the Portuguese-American community at large.

If you have any questions about this or other legislation, please contact NOPA's Government Affairs Team at info@nopa-us.org or 703-389-3512.

Legislative Update

Last week, after many months of engagement in the health care debate, Congress passed and President Obama signed health care reform legislation that will provide coverage to millions of previously uninsured Americans.

So, what happens next? While it will take years for the legislation to be fully implemented, the very near future will offer many changes in health care. For example:

- Young adults will be able to remain on their parents' health insurance plan until age 26.
- Lifetime caps on the amount of insurance an individual can have will be banned.
- Insurance companies can no longer revoke coverage if an individual becomes ill.
- Tax credit for small businesses to provide coverage.

In the coming weeks, NOPA will have more useful information to help you understand how our new health care system will affect you. We are committed to ensuring that your transition into the new system will be as easy and smooth as possible.

To find out how your Representative voted click here: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll165.xml>

Understanding Health Care Reform: Impact of the New Legislation

The new national health care bill just signed into law by President Barack Obama marks a major overhaul of the nation's health care system. The following answers address questions about changes that will come over the next decade.

How significant is this legislation?

This legislation is probably the most important health care legislation in generations and the most important since the creation of Medicare and Medicaid in the 1960s.

What are the key provisions of the new health care law?

It will expand health insurance coverage over the next decade to another 32 million Americans and thus greatly reduce the number of uninsured. It will also help improve coverage for those who already are insured by eliminating



the pre-existing condition exclusion that insurers have been able to use to deny coverage to people with illnesses or other medical conditions. The law will also help to make health care insurance coverage more affordable for people, provide subsidies for millions of low-to-moderate income Americans to purchase private health care insurance and expand Medicaid to millions more who are not covered, including low income parents and adults who don't have children.

Who will be the largest beneficiaries of the law?

There are different types of beneficiaries. Many people will get health care who are currently excluded, including people living below the poverty line, which is an annual income of around \$22,000 for a family of four. Additional federal subsidies will help people in that income range. Specifically, tax credits will help these people purchase health insurance from health insurance exchanges. It will take time to set those up, so that's why these provisions don't take effect until 2014.

When will these provisions take effect?

Changes in regulatory policies like the expansion of dependent coverage under private insurance and elimination of the pre-existing condition exclusion will happen fairly soon. Other provisions such as the creation of health insurance exchanges or reforms to Medicaid will happen in 2014. Although the president just signed the legislation, there is a "fix-it" bill-which slightly tweaks the original legislation- that just passed in the House of Representatives and is now in the Senate.

What financial sources will cover the expansion of insurance?

The insurance expansions are being paid for by a combination of savings from existing spending and some new health care-related taxes. Currently, there's a Medicare program that offers extra coverage called Medicare Advantage, which costs the government about 13 percent more than traditional Medicare. But in the new health care bill, parts of this Medicare Advantage program will be cut to save approximately \$132 billion over 10 years. Some people have also talked about creating revenue with a new tax on "Cadillac" health insurance plans-plans that are very expensive. There will also be a higher Medicare payroll tax imposed on people who make more than \$250,000 a year.

**A Look at Student Loan Reform:
Changes Under the New Law**

Just a week after signing the landmark national health care bill, President Barack Obama signed legislation on March 30th that will overhaul the federal student loan program. The following answers address questions about changes under the new law.

What are the major provisions of the new student loan law?

The law eliminates the Family Education Loan Program, which funded Federal Stafford Loans and PLUS Loans, which are given to parents and graduate students. Students will no longer apply for federal loans through private lenders. Instead, students only need to apply for federal government loans through the Federal Direct Loan Program, and the U.S. Department of Education will serve as the new lender.

When does the law go into effect?

June 30, 2010.

Do the eligibility requirements change?

Eligibility remains exactly the same.



How will students be affected?

The application process will be much easier, and the electronic transfer of funds will be more timely and efficient. With faster and more reliable delivery of funds to student accounts, this will more than likely reduce the number of students faced with financial holds, which can result in students being prevented from registering for classes.

What do current students with student loans need to do?

There is no need to notify your current lender in order to participate in the Federal Direct Loan Program. Students need to sign a new Master Promissory Note with the U.S. Department of Education. If you have existing Stafford loans, you may want to consider consolidating past loans into the Federal Direct Loan Program. More information can be found [here](#).

How will the new law affect repayment requirements?

In the future, some students who borrow money will be allowed to cap their repayments at 10 percent of their income, down from the current 15 percent. Students who keep up their payments will have any remaining debt forgiven after 20 years instead of the current 25.

Will interest rates change?

Interest rates will be similar to those charged by private lenders, if not lower.

Because the new law eliminates fees paid to private lenders, the government can save about \$68 billion over 10 years. What will some of those savings go towards?

A portion of the savings will go towards the Pell Grant Program, which provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate students.

Statements of Interest

HONORING MR. OTTO IGNACIO COELHO, SR. -- [Page: E474]

SPEECH OF HON. DENNIS A. CARDOZA OF CALIFORNIA IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2010

Mr. CARDOZA. Madam Speaker, Congressman COSTA and I rise today to honor the life of our dear friend, Mr. Otto Ignacio Coelho, Sr., a long time resident of Hilmar, California. Mr. Coelho passed away at the age of 92. Mr. Coelho was a strong leader of the community and served on numerous Portuguese organizations. Although a native of Tulare, California, he made Hilmar his home. He was one of six children born to Pauline and Pedro Coelho who immigrated to the United States from Terceira, the Azores in Portugal.

Otto was raised on the family dairy until his family moved to Monterey. His father was a fisherman and Otto worked for a time selling the fish his father and brother caught. Otto eventually returned to the Central Valley and the dairy industry. On September 3, 1938, Otto married the love of his life, Alice Branco, whom he had known since childhood. Otto was involved in the dairy industry until the 1960s, after which time he did custom farming and later was active in farm equipment sales for N&S Tractor Company.

After retirement, Otto became even more involved in the Pentecost celebrations he had loved since a child. He was a member of the Dos Palos DES Stevinson Pentecost Association, Nossa Senhora do Rosario of Hilmar, and Our Lady of Fatima Los Banos. He greatly enjoyed making the rounds to collect for Festa celebrations throughout the valley,



and proudly kept his route books. He was a member of the SES. Otto was also deeply devoted to his Catholic faith, and was a long-time member and officer of the YMI at Holy Rosary St. Mary's Catholic Church in Hilmar, where he lived since 1965. He also belonged to the Knights of Columbus and was active in Casa da Azores in Hilmar.

Otto and Alice raised four children, Otto Jr. (Claudette) of Madera, Gilbert (Carol) of Firebaugh, Tony (Phyllis) of Delaware, and Susan Mattos of Newman. He is also survived by 15 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandson. He is also survived by his sisters, Mercedes Martins of Watsonville, Nira Jean Perry (Joe) of Hollister, and Lee Coelho (Nancy) of Lemoore.

Otto Coelho was a pillar of our community. His strong sense of faith, family, and community speak volumes for generations to come. It is our honor to recognize Otto Coelho and to honor his legacy at this time. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family on their loss.

Donate Now - Madeira Credit Card Donation Account

NOPA has opened a specific account to take credit card donations for our Portuguese brothers and sisters trying to rebuild their lives in Madeira. If you still have not donated yet and desire a more convenient process than making a bank wire transfer, you can send your contribution by going to the NOPA website, www.nopa-us.org, and click the donation button to proceed and use your credit card. All donations will be sent to the Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa (Portuguese Red Cross). Those still wishing to make a donation via bank transfer can find the account information on our site as well.

The source for all Congressional legislation information on this report was the THOMAS system from The Library of Congress (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>). Links for each of the bills listed above direct readers to the THOMAS web page specific to the bill.

You can find a PDF file of this and other alerts at NOPA's [website](http://www.nopa-us.org). If you have any questions about this or other legislation, please contact NOPA's Government Affairs Team at info@nopa-us.org or 703-389-3512.

The National Organization of Portuguese-Americans is a national non-profit, tax exempt organization that supports and works with communities and organizations to advocate for and empower Portuguese-Americans. If you feel inspired to join our mission, please send your tax deductible contribution to:

**NOPA, Inc.
PO Box 2652**



Falls Church, VA 22042