



# WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

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## **Closing the Gap in Health Care**

When the federal government shut down for 16 days, more than 800,000 “nonessential” federal employees became unemployed. No one believed it would go that far. After more than 41 attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), health care reform became the scapegoat for the government shutdown. Was it a mere coincidence that opening day of enrollment for the health insurance marketplace was the day the government shutdown occurred? Maybe. Maybe not. You decide.

The Patient Protection Affordable Care Act gives more than 40 million uninsured folks health insurance. Yet, ‘trusted leaders’ have taken a stand against the 2010 law, declaring, “We need to delay providing this benefit,” because giving poor and middle class hard working people another entitlement makes them rely too much on the government.

Having an illness or a chronic disease and not being able to get much needed care diminishes a person’s quality of life and can contribute to premature death. The ACA has created a new space for how we care for each other. Healthcare reform takes away the control insurance companies once held and holds hospitals accountable for the quality of care they deliver. Healthcare is a basic human right that all God’s children deserve, but right-wing extremists continue to spin exaggerated or inaccurate analyses

which only serve to create anger, anxiety, blaming, uncertainty and more despair among hard working families.

Much can be said about a people by the way we care for the most vulnerable citizens, our babies and our elders. The United States ranks 38th in healthcare systems according to the World Health Organization. In May 2013, the Huffington Post reported that “the US falls behind 68 other countries in infant mortality.” As baby boomers mature, we now have more people over the age 50 than ever in our history. An aging population is one of the greatest challenges we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Health insurance coverage for all people should not be negotiable.

The ACA provides: no annual or lifetime caps of benefits; free preventive services like mammograms, prostate exams and colonoscopies; a 50% reduction on prescription drugs with elimination of the donut hole by 2020; allowance for children up to age 26 to stay on parent’s insurance; elimination of gender based pricing, elimination of denials based on pre-existing conditions; and additional resources for doctors to provide better care. ACA saves money from a reduction in waste, fraud, abuse and Medicare costs.

It is time to let our legislators know we need them to do their constitutional duty and provide for the well-being of their public. Where healthcare is concerned, the ACA is a good start. We need our legislators to help make it work for everyone, rather than create obstructions that serve no one.

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