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OVERNIGHT HEALTH: WH starts weeklong reform rally

By Healthwatch staff - 03/21/11 06:11 PM ET

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Tax time reform boost? The Obama administration and its allies launched a concerted effort Monday to get the word out about the healthcare reform law's small-business tax credits as employers prepare to file their taxes.

An estimated 4 million small businesses could be eligible for a tax credit of up to 35 percent of their healthcare costs this year, according to the Small Business Administration (SBA). But critics say the credits' restrictions are too stringent — they're only for businesses with 25 or fewer employees that pay average annual wages of less than \$50,000 — and the administration is eager to prove them wrong by getting as many businesses to sign up as possible.

To that end, the SBA released a memo on Monday to help businesses understand the credits' eligibility requirements and application process. Healthwatch's Julian Pecquet has the [story](#).

Planned Parenthood battle rages on: Lawmakers who thought they could escape the raw debate over abortion by going home this week aren't getting any relief. The Susan B. Anthony List on Monday launched a weeklong [campaign](#) to flood lawmakers' phones with calls to strip the nation's largest abortion provider of federal funding for preventive and family planning services in its long-term budget for the rest of the year.

Pence under fire: Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.), the lead proponent for defunding Planned Parenthood, is taking heavy criticism from abortion-rights groups after telling a radio station that he "never advocated reducing funding for Title X" family planning. Pence sponsored legislation that would bar Planned Parenthood from getting millions of dollars of Title X funding, and he voted for House Republicans' stopgap budget bill for the rest of the year, which eliminates funding for the program.

No conflict for states taking money: David Rivkin, the outside lead counsel for the 26 states involved in a federal lawsuit challenging healthcare reform, says the states' acceptance of implementation funds doesn't undercut their opposition to the law.

"If a given state wants to continue complying with ObamaCare and receiving the money, that is appropriate in terms of both not impairing the ability to challenge it and in terms of the federal government to give out the money to states," Rivkin said during a Cato Institute event on Monday.

Rehberg wants CLASS probe: Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-Mont.) wants to know whether the Department of Health and Human Services knew the long-term insurance

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program created by healthcare reform was unsustainable before the law was enacted. He's asking HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to provide information about actuarial models conducted by the department before the law was enacted. Read the [Healthwatch story](#).

HHS sets quality plan: HHS released a **National Quality Strategy** (NQS), required by healthcare reform, on Monday. The first year of the NQS describes a broad plan, but healthcare reform requires the department to eventually set agency-specific quality benchmarks.

The strategy sets several priorities: reducing harm caused in the delivery of care; engaging patients and families in care; promoting effective prevention and treatment; working with communities to promote best practices; and developing and spreading new affordable healthcare delivery models.

Generic drugmakers warn of CR cuts: Across-the-board budget cuts to the Food and Drug Administration office that approves generic drugs "could significantly impair the ability of the agency to approve generics" and end up costing taxpayers and the government billions, the Generic Pharmaceutical Association writes in a **letter** to House and Senate leaders and the White House budget director, Jacob Lew.

"We are working with the FDA and Congress this year on the development of a generic drug user fee program," GPhA Vice President John Coster writes. "This program will provide private-sector funds to supplement federal appropriations to help reduce the backlog of generic drug applications, and to assure the more timely approval of generic medications. However, significant cuts to the OGD program at this critical time would be devastating to millions of consumers, employers and other

payers that rely on the timely approval of generics to help better manage their healthcare costs."

Report says no effect on jobs: A new **report** from the Urban Institute says healthcare reform will have "no noticeable effect on net levels of employment." The widely panned "employer mandate" will have little effect because most firms with 50 or more employers already offer private insurance in accordance with federal standards, the organization said.

New look for innovation center: CMS launched a new website on Monday for the \$10 billion Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation. The center, created by the healthcare reform law, is asking for feedback on ways to improve the healthcare system for Medicare, Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries. The new website: innovations.cms.gov

Tuesday's agenda:

The party goes on: The healthcare reform battle is front and center again on Tuesday, a day before the one-year anniversary of the law. Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) is hosting a rally with community groups back in his district. On Capitol Hill, the Heritage Foundation and the National Federation of Independent Business are teaming up to discuss the law's impact on business.

Administration reaches out to seniors: HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius is meeting with Pittsburgh seniors to discuss how the law benefits them. Kathy Greenlee, who heads the Administration on Aging, will discuss the law with Alliance for Retired Americans members in Bridgeton, Mo. Meanwhile, senior groups will hold 18 events in 15 states.

Reading list:

Vermont state legislators are set to begin debate on a single-payer healthcare bill, the *Burlington Free Press* **reports**.

The *Washington Post* Fact Checker blog **looks at** some questionable claims from Democrats about healthcare reform.

A new poll finds that, while Democrats' top concern is healthcare, that issue doesn't even crack the top five for Republicans, *USA Today* **writes**.

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HEALTHCARE NEWS

- [Number of healthcare reform law waivers climbs above 1,000](#)
- [Democrats warn that budget cuts threaten Medicare enrollment](#)
- [Judges' agreement on healthcare penalties not being a tax is key](#)
- [Medicaid fight shapes up as states deal with budget crunching](#)
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- [Tough week leaves Boehner, majority in confusion, picking up the pieces](#)
- [Senate Dems fear abortion vote](#)
- [Conscience rights debate reignited by abortion funds bill](#)
- [GOP plans 'unrelenting' healthcare repeal effort, even after Senate defeat](#)
- [Senate rejects healthcare repeal](#)
- [Democrats mount most aggressive fight yet to protect healthcare reform law](#)
- [GOP to finally get its chance to grill controversial Medicare appointee](#)
- [Obama vigorously defends healthcare reform: 'Granny is safe'](#)

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BRIEFING ROOM

- [Top Dem rejects calls for Obama impeachment over Libya](#)
- [US fighter jet crashes in Libya, two crew members recovered](#)
- [Obama has no 'clear and convincing' foreign policy, Romney says](#)

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Georgia lawmakers are making numerous efforts to block healthcare reform, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* **reports**.

Abortion battles are springing up in numerous states, *CBS News* **reports**.

Friday's Congressional Budget Office score of the president's budget hiked the cost of healthcare reform by \$40 billion, *The Wall Street Journal* **highlights**.

Lobbying registrations (since Friday):

Hogan Lovells US / VitalWear Inc. (durable medical equipment)

PKDorn and Associates / Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation of Kansas (Department of Defense analysis and research)

What you might have missed on healthwatch:

North Dakota **joined** the list of states asking for a waiver from healthcare reform's medical-loss ratio requirements.

Healthcare advocates **are hoping** for a broad package of "essential health benefits."

There will be **plenty** of fights over healthcare reform provisions in the year ahead.

Comments / complaints / suggestions?

Please let us know:

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Jason Millman: jmillman@thehill.com / 202-628-8351

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- Gov. Walker's educational budget
- Increasing our competitiveness
- Day Eight: Marsa Matrouh, Egypt

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PUNDITS BLOG

- Waiting for Dorothy: The unbearable quiet of Hadas Fogel
- Obama to impose fly zone
- What a difference three years make

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TWITTER ROOM

- Boehner, Clinton toast Twitter on its fifth anniversary
- Gingrich congratulates Pawlenty on White House bid
- Pelosi tweets after brief hospitalization

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HILLICON VALLEY

- Group wants more disclosure on political ads
- Morning Bytes
- OVERNIGHT TECH: Wireless execs, Genachowski to meet at CTIA

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E²-WIRE

- Poll: Japanese crisis cuts U.S. nuke energy support
- News bites: Taking stock of Japan's nuclear regulation, the battle to contain the reactors, and more
- OVERNIGHT ENERGY: Republicans pounce on Obama's Brazilian oil support

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BALLOT BOX

- Herman Cain worries Muslims 'trying to convert the rest of us'
- Indiana Republican jumps into race against Rep. Donnelly
- Angle woos press before House run

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ON THE MONEY

- National Education Association calls for delay on debit card limits
- News bites: Social Security disability program on the ropes
- Fiscal groups call for Planned Parenthood defunding

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HEALTHWATCH

- Seniors saved \$40M in doughnut hole, administration says
- MORNING ROUNDUP: It's seniors' turn
- OVERNIGHT HEALTH: WH starts weeklong reform rally

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FLOOR ACTION

- Van Hollen says expanded mission in Libya would require more explanation from Obama
- Foreign Affairs Chair Ros-Lehtinen says U.S. should leave UN Human Rights Council
- Rangel: President should have consulted

... Manager / President should have contacted Congress on Libya attack

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TRANSPORTATION

- Morning Speed-Read: March 22, 2011
- LaHood visits Kansas Cessna plant
- Highway Administration to monitor bridges more closely

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