

Supreme Court rules in favor of subsidies; supporters, detractors sound off

By Mori Kessler
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ST. GEORGE – The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Affordable Care Act tax subsidies in a 6-3 vote Thursday morning. Politicians and others within Utah and beyond have both praised and blasted the decision.

The case argued before the court, *King v. Burwell*, focused on whether or not the federal government could distribute tax credits, or subsidies, through the Healthcare.gov federal exchange. States that had set up their own exchanges would not be affected by the decision. Utah is one of 37 states that does not have a state-level exchange.

The plaintiff in the case argued that the government had overstepped its bounds by allowing subsidies through the federal exchange. This argument stemmed from a seven-word phrase in section 1401 of the ACA that states “through an exchange established by the state.”

The majority of the Supreme Court justices were not persuaded by the plaintiff’s argument.

According to Arches Health Plan, over 100,000 Utahns depend on the subsidy to maintain health coverage.

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“We’re very excited about the outcome today,” Shaun Greene, Arches Health Plan COO, said in a press release on the ruling. “If things had gone differently today, many of our members wouldn’t be able to afford their health insurance. It would put our members in a very difficult situation.”

In the same press release, Aaron Quarnberg, Arches vice-president of member services, said, “We hope today’s decision puts an end to attempts to rescind important provisions of the Affordable Care Act.”

Detractors of the ACA have called it a flawed law; they claim it has actually restricted health care access for individuals and caused insurance premiums to increase. Members of Utah’s congressional delegation are also sponsoring new legislation, the [Empowering Patients First Act](#), in yet another attempt to replace the ACA.

U.S. Health and Human Services Sec. Sylvia Burwell also praised the Supreme Court's ruling:

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Today's Supreme Court decision confirms that the Affordable Care Act's tax credits are available to all eligible Americans no matter where they live. Americans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia can continue to rely on the security and peace of mind that come with affordable, quality health care coverage.

Over six million Americans and their families will sleep easier knowing they will still be able to afford health coverage. Millions more won't have to worry about an upward spiral in their premiums because of today's decision, even if they didn't buy their insurance through the Marketplace. And the law's financial assistance will be available in the next open enrollment so that others can benefit as well.

From Peter Corroon, Utah Democratic Party chair:

Today, 86,000 Utahns will go to sleep knowing conservative attempts to take away their health coverage have been thwarted yet again. The Supreme Court protected the right of millions of Americans to access to affordable health coverage today, and it's time for our state legislature to do the same by passing and implementing Medicaid expansion in Utah.

We urge our state to work for the health and well-being of all Utahns by passing the Healthy Utah compromise

Utah Democrats support the Affordable Care Act as the law of the land; but most importantly, we support Utahns, who deserve the right to quality, affordable healthcare. Now that the King v. Burwell decision has been made, our state legislature can run out of excuses to avoid passing Medicaid expansion. We urge our state to work for the health and well-being of all Utahns by passing the Healthy Utah compromise as soon as possible.

However, not everyone is happy about the ruling.

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert issued the following statement following the ruling:

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I am very disappointed in the ruling from the Supreme Court this morning. Unfortunately, it appears the plain meaning of the text of the law no longer matters to the court. I have said from the beginning, the Affordable Care Act is flawed. Ultimately, we are a nation of laws and I will continue to work diligently to maximize state flexibility within the legal parameters. We must ensure federal tax dollars Utahns pay under this law provide optimal benefit to our state. I

will continue to strongly support Republican efforts at the federal level to repeal and replace Obamacare with policies that provide access while addressing the rising costs of healthcare.

Rep. Chris Stewart, R-Utah:

I'm extremely disappointed in the Supreme Court's ruling today, and agree with Justice Scalia that "words no longer have any meaning."

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The Supreme Court has chosen to disregard the plain language of the statute in favor of the Obama Administration. They have also chosen to disregard the harmful impacts of the law on Americans. I have heard so many personal stories from my constituents about how they've lost their trusted doctors, lost their health care plans and seen their premiums increased due to Obamacare. While undoubtedly some people have benefited from the law, its overall impact appears overwhelmingly harmful to the U.S. healthcare system.

Today's Supreme Court announcement does nothing to lessen my resolve to replace Obamacare with a more patient centered health care plan. I remain convinced that Obamacare must be replaced with a plan that empowers patients by taking the government out of their health care choices and lowers costs by enabling the free market. I'm proud to be a co-sponsor of the Empowering Patients First Act, which does all of these things and I continue to push for its passage.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R- Utah:

Today's ruling failed to hold the Obama Administration responsible for its reckless execution of its own poorly-crafted law. The plain text of Obamacare authorizes subsidies only through state exchanges, not the federal exchange. This decision allows the Obama Administration simply to ignore the law and to implement its own preferred policy instead.

Obamacare has been a series of broken promises from the start

Obamacare has been a series of broken promises from the start. From skyrocketing costs to less access to care and more bureaucratic control of the healthcare system, the President's law has failed patients and taxpayers. And, unfortunately, absent a cooperative President, the negative consequences of Obamacare will continue. The American people deserve better.

Fortunately, Republicans have a plan to reverse this course by repealing and replacing Obamacare with reforms that put patients – not Washington – first. Moving forward, we will continue to seek input on our legislative proposal – the Patient Care Act – and use every opportunity available to give both states and patients more freedom and flexibility. We will continue to work toward real reform that lowers costs and helps Americans access high quality

healthcare. By putting patients first, we will end the negative consequences of Obamacare and implement policy that is good medicine for American families.

Hatch is the coauthor of the [Patient CARE Act](#), a legislative plan that repeals Obamacare and replaces it with common-sense, patient-focused reforms that reduce healthcare costs and increase access to affordable, high-quality care, with House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton and Sen. Richard Burr.

Email: mkessler@stgnews.com

Twitter: [@MoriKessler](#)