

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

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## **The U.S. Supreme Court's Historic Healthcare Reform Decision** **A Courageous Opinion Upholding the Affordable Care Act** **Good News for Alabamians**

MONTGOMERY (June 28, 2012) - In its historic decision released today the U.S. Supreme Court has courageously upheld the constitutionality of the Federal Affordable Care Act ("ACA") and two of its central provisions, namely the individual mandate to purchase health insurance and the expansion of Medicaid. This is great news for the nearly 750,000 Alabamians who currently do not have health insurance and for Alabamians who will benefit from the ACA's provisions that ended some of the worse abuses of the health insurance industry.

Alabama Appleseed's Executive Director John Pickens heralded the decision by saying: "Today's decision is great news for Alabama and the health of its citizens. By upholding the individual mandate and the expansion of Medicaid, Alabamians who for years have been unable to afford or obtain health insurance will now have the opportunity to secure affordable health insurance coverage that, in turn, will allow them to receive the quality health care that they need. For too long many Alabama families have gone without access to both preventative medical care and acute medical care for illnesses and accidental injuries. Today's decision will reverse that trend and set us on a new road so that every Alabamian will have access to affordable and quality health care."

In today's ruling Chief Justice Roberts joined Justices Breyer, Ginsburg, Kagan, and Sotomayor to form a majority that upheld the individual mandate as a constitutional exercise of Congress' power to tax. Although the majority opinion written by Chief Justice Roberts concluded that Congress did not have the power under the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution to enact the individual mandate, the Justices found that the Federal government's power of taxation did give Congress that power and was sufficient to uphold the individual mandate. While upholding the ACA's expansion of Medicaid, which provides substantial federal funding to the states for the expansion, the majority opinion held that under the ACA the federal government did not have the authority to penalize states that choose not to participate in the expansion by taking away their existing Medicaid funding. Otherwise, the Medicaid expansion was upheld.

Appleseed's John Pickens said further: "Now that the ACA has been upheld it is time for us in Alabama to come together to implement the ACA's provisions so our citizens can take advantage of the vast benefits that the ACA offers. Most particularly, the Governor, our state legislators and all healthcare advocates need to quickly come together to move forward to pass legislation that will establish a health insurance exchange for Alabama, which will be the new marketplace for affordable health insurance coverage for Alabamians currently without health insurance. If we don't do this quickly, by the end of this year, we likely will be faced with having to operate under a federal health insurance exchange. For the long term we need to be thinking of creative ways to fund our part of the expansion of Medicaid once the initial federal funding of the expansion is completed. Medicaid is so important for both the health of our citizens and for the financial sustainability of our health care provider network that it is imperative that we as a state participate in the expansion but also find a way to sustain it for the long haul. A healthy Alabama means a more prosperous Alabama."

Today's decision will also mean that fewer Alabamians will die due to their lack of health insurance coverage. In a June 2012 report issued by Families USA it is reported that an estimated 2,668 Alabamians died between 2005 and 2010 due to their lack of health insurance. Thanks to the ACA so many premature deaths of fellow Alabamians will now be prevented.

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