

Immediate Release

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Number of Uninsured West Virginians Continues to Drop

Additional Progress Projected in Coming Years

Slightly more West Virginians now have access to affordable health care, according to data released today from the Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey. In 2013, 14 percent of West Virginians were uninsured, a slight drop from 2012.

Even greater gains in access to health care are expected to appear in next year's data which will reflect the tens of thousands who have gained coverage through Medicaid expansion and the state's health insurance marketplace. A recent Gallup poll predicts West Virginia will see its share of uninsured drop from 17.6 percent in 2013 to 11.9 percent in 2014. Such a large drop would rank West Virginia in the top ten for the largest reduction in a state's uninsured population.

Close to 140,000 West Virginians gained access to affordable health care when Governor Earl Ray Tomblin decided to expand Medicaid in 2013. Also last year, West Virginians were able to sign up for coverage through the marketplace and qualify for federal subsidies to help cover the cost of their premiums.

"Expanding health insurance coverage will not only improve our state's health, but it will help our businesses, communities, and workforce grow," said Erin Snyder, health policy analyst with the West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy. "Access to affordable health care is a boost for working families who are struggling to make ends meet."

"When he decided to expand Medicaid last year, Governor Tomblin took a giant step in improving the health of over 150,000 West Virginians," stated Ted Boettner, executive director with the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. "In a state that ranks low on many health factors like obesity and diabetes, efforts to undo this progress will jeopardize not only the health of working families and their children, but the state's economy."

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The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy (www.wvpolicy.org) is a public policy research organization that is nonpartisan, nonprofit, and statewide. The Center focuses on how policy decisions affect all West Virginians, especially low- and moderate-income families.