



Louisiana Small Business Leaders React to New Health Care Analysis ***WILL BE VISIBLE ALONG ROUTE TO OBAMA EVENTS IN NOLA***

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Senate Finance Bill Needs Senator Landrieu's Attention Concerned about penalties on America's business owners

The Louisiana Campaign for Responsible Health Reform, which includes more than one-third of Louisiana's Chambers of Commerce, the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, and nearly 100 business owners, expressed concern that tax increases, employer mandates, and a rigid 'play-or-pay' mentality will be used to derail real Senate discussions about health care cost containment, elimination of waste, healthcare choice, fairness, increased competition and tort reform.

"We're concerned that the end result will end up costing businesses and their employees more for health care. The taxes imposed by proposed legislation on insurers, high-end insurance plans, medical device manufacturers, and pharmaceutical manufacturers—combined with reductions in Medicare payments—will lead to cost-shifting to employer-sponsored coverage and higher premiums for private purchased health insurance," said Louisiana Campaign Director David Huguene.

"I'm confident Senator Mary Landrieu will be sure small business voices are heard in this important discussion," said Mike Mitternacht, Factory Service Agency of Jefferson Parish.

A report released by the insurance industry this week, and completed by PriceWaterHouse, says provisions in the proposed Baucus bill such as a new tax on high-cost health care plans, will increase private health

insurance premiums at approximately 49 percent increase for individuals and 28 percent for small employers.

"One of the primary goals of health care reform is the over-riding need to reduce ever-escalating costs for both the individual and for employers. The Senate Finance Committee bill makes unilateral government imposed reforms without regard for the market-based impact," said U.S. Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President of Government Affairs Bruce Josten.

Members of the Campaign for Responsible Health Reform will line the drive routes of President Barack Obama's entourage during his visit, but not attend the town hall meeting.

"We hope the President and our congressional leaders hear our message, but we wanted to respect today's focus on the needs of our community related to Katrina recovery," said Mr. Huguenel. "We want health reform now, but businesses provide health insurance to 170 million people. Business and their employees need reforms that will slow the cost of health insurance. Higher taxes will add only more costs, not lower them."

The U.S. Chamber is the world's largest business federation representing more than 3 million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region.

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