

AARP Idaho
For Immediate Release

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GOV. SIGNS LAW PUTTING POLITICS BEFORE PATIENTS

Idaho Health Freedom Act Does Nothing to Tackle State's Health Care Crisis & Everything to Make it Worse

BOISE, Idaho - The health care crisis hundreds of thousands of Idahoans face every day may have just gone from bad to worse with the stroke of a pen. Today, Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter signed the Idaho Health Freedom Act into law, a bill strongly opposed by AARP.

"This law does nothing to make Idaho's health care crisis and everything to make it worse – it is bad policy," said Jim Wordelman, State Director for AARP in Idaho. "Families, children and the elderly are facing real health care problems, high costs and no access to needed health care; this bill doesn't address those kitchen-table issues."

The new law takes aim at a possible health insurance mandate under a non-existent federal health care law. The law also allocates a minimum of \$100,000 to defend the matter in federal court if needed. Legal experts across the nation have said such legal actions stand little to no chance of success.

AARP fears that the new law could have severe short- and long-term policy implications, while placing at risk the state's \$1.6 billion in federal matching funds for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, as well as the jobs associated with the program.

"Idaho residents struggling to afford soaring health premiums and rising prescription drug prices will get no relief under this law," added Wordelman. "This is a problem at a time when we need solutions -- and that's not a good move for Idahoans."

Idaho has over 221,000 uninsured, of which nearly 90% have jobs but cannot afford health care; nearly 30% of Idaho's Medicare beneficiaries are stuck in the prescription drug "doughnut hole" forced to pay 100% of the cost of their prescriptions, leaving many to skip pills or simply go without; over 100,000 Idaho residents spend upwards of 25% of their income on health care costs. According to a recent AARP survey, older Idahoans said high health care costs have an impact on their household budgets.

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