

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

Checking Up on the Healthcare Finance Industry.



2012 Presidential Election Puts Healthcare at the Forefront

By Jeff Gorski, PFS Group

When President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in March 2010 to reform the nation's healthcare system, it was one of the most debated decisions passed two years into the president's term. The continued discussion surrounding the law since then has pushed healthcare to become one of the top campaign issues in the 2012 presidential campaign.

Americans still remain relatively divided on the healthcare law, according to a December CBS News/New York Times Poll. While 45 percent of Americans think it should be repealed, 41 percent think the law should be kept. Such a close split means that the candidates' stance on the issue will surely affect voters at the polls, as they ultimately decide not only on who our next president should be, but also on the future of healthcare reform.

Most Republican candidates advocate repealing and replacing much of the law. The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a challenge to the law, with a decision to be made in late June — right in the midst of the 2012 presidential campaign. The court's decision could potentially affect the president's re-election prospects, and the ruling will definitely have impact on voters at the polls.

The Obama administration remains confident that the court will uphold the law, and experts say the White House's support of the court's timetable for the ruling stems from their hope for a favorable decision that would sway public opinion in Obama's favor. If the court rules to uphold the Affordable Care Act, the law might become more popular among voters, but if the court chooses to overturn it, the resulting decision could strengthen feelings against it.

The court's ruling and the upcoming election both stand to play a pivotal role in the future of healthcare reform. It is voters' job then to understand both sides of the issue so that they can make an informed decision come November. Moreover, Americans should acknowledge that, regardless of whether the law is eventually upheld or repealed, the healthcare system will undergo changes. As a result, the public will need to take on greater individual responsibility for their healthcare.

Americans' increased personal stake and interest in the future of healthcare and what it means for them will result in more questions and concerns, as they seek to understand their options. As more responsibility transfers to the patient, the importance of quality customer service, informed patient account representatives and a courteous, conscientious approach becomes critical in addressing those questions.

What does this mean for hospitals and for the healthcare finance industry? For hospitals, it means that choosing the right self-pay partner can have a huge impact on their patients' well-being and on the hospital's ROI. For our industry, it means that we must continue providing support and guidance for our clients and their patients so that they can make the most informed decisions possible.

