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Jeff Susman, MD
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Health care reform: Forget perfection and do what's possible

Reaction to the Supreme Court's recent ruling on the constitutionality of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) is a true measure of America. We can continue to politicize the health care of millions of citizens, jeopardize preventive care, and further fray the safety net—or we can finally get down to the business of good government. It's time to embrace this law, which has the potential to greatly reduce the number of Americans who have no health coverage, without waiting for or expecting perfection.

Implementation of the ACA provisions will involve compromise and stewardship on the part of our elected officials. Yet many legislators appear to be averse to

both. The House of Representatives wasted no time voting for the Repeal of Ombamacare Act (HR 6079); governors began grandstanding; and talk of a "rationing board," "job killer," and "government takeover," among other ridiculous sound bites, flooded the airwaves.

Although the Supreme Court ruled that states can opt out of the Medicaid expansion included in the law, reports suggesting that states that fully implement the law could actually save money^{1,2} would suggest that politicians who oppose it are focused on fiscal folly.

It's not only elected officials who are looking at the new law from their perspective alone rather than focusing on what's best for patients and the community. Health insurers want to retain the ability to differentiate their rates, medical device manufacturers hope to repeal a tax on the sale of their products, and hospital CEOs are pushing for an expansion of Medicaid and reductions in payment cuts. Even with the expansion of Medicaid, the United States would fall far short of universal coverage, leaving millions of Americans without effective access to care.

To our country's leaders, I have but what one question: "Will you have the courage to abandon political ideology in order to do what is possible?"

Isn't it time we start to do what every other industrialized nation has done?

1. Buettgens M, Dorn S, Carroll C. Consider savings as well as costs. July 13, 2011. Urban Institute. Available at: <http://www.urban.org/publications/412361.html>. Accessed July 19, 2012.
2. DeMillo A. Ark. DHS: \$372M in savings from Medicaid expansion. July 18, 2012. *Bloomberg Businessweek News*. Available at: <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2012-07-18/ark-dot-dhs-372m-in-savings-from-medicaid-expansion>. Accessed July 19, 2012.


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