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Health exchanges slow to attract young, healthy

Most California enrollees older, with health problems

By MICHAEL R. BLOOM
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Fears that insurance exchanges that are the linchpin of President Barack Obama's federal health care overhaul wouldn't attract the young, healthy people needed to make them financially viable are being heightened by the early results of signups in several states.

If it becomes a trend, that could lead to increases in insurance premiums and deductibles next year. Along with the policy enrollment numbers released this week, officials in a handful of states said those who had managed to sign up were generally older people with medical problems — those with the greatest incentives to get coverage.

It's unclear whether that will persist. Young, healthy people may be more inclined to procrastinate, especially given doubts about the law's technically flawed online signup system. They have until Dec. 15 to sign up if they want to be covered on Jan. 1.

Insurers have warned that they need a wide range of people signing up for coverage because premiums paid by adults in the younger and healthier group, between 18 and 35, are needed to offset the cost of carrying older and sicker customers who typically generate far more in medical bills than they contribute in premiums.

The first set of enrollment data revealed that 106,000 people signed up for coverage nationwide, far short of the 300,000 initial sign-ups the Obama administration had expected. In states where officials discussed more detailed information, it also became apparent that the people who flocked to the exchanges after they opened Oct. 1 were those who were desperate for coverage.

In California, the state with the largest uninsured population, most of those who applied were older people with health problems. In Kentucky, nearly 3 of 4 enrollees were over 35. In Washington state, about 23 percent of enrollees were between 18 and 34. And in Ohio, groups helping with enrollment described many of those coming to them as older residents who lost their jobs and health coverage during the recession.

Diplomatic gathering



MIKE ELIASON/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Jim Martinez, left, of the Presidio Soldiers re-enactment group reads a proclamation for Prince Felipe of Asturias, third from right.

Spain's royal heir among dignitaries in SB for U.S.-Spain Council forum



Above and at right, Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., and other delegates of the U.S.-Spain Council visit the Santa Barbara Mission.

By REBECCA BORLAUG
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Calm temperatures and a relaxed atmosphere welcomed delegates and prominent business leaders and royalty from Spain and the United States as they converged in Santa Barbara on Friday for the U.S.-Spain Council's 18th annual forum.

The world leaders and policy makers will focus today's discussions on Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations, as well as private sector innovations



in energy efficiency and technology.

A tour Friday afternoon highlighted Santa Barbara's Spanish heritage for the delegates, with stops at the Santa Barbara Mission, the Presidio and Casa de la Guerra.

"From renewable energy and trade and investment, to education and cultural bonds, and a close partnership in combating global terrorism, the historic ties that bind the United States and Spain are

deep and centuries long," said Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and honorary co-chair of the U.S.-Spain Council.

"Santa Barbara serves as a perfect and historic venue to expand that relationship and chart a course forward highlighted by continued cooperation between our two

Please see **FORUM** on A8

Montecito group, Caltrans meet over 101 plans

By CATHERINE SHEEN
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

After meeting with members of the Montecito coalition group Common Sense 101 and Caltrans on Friday to discuss the Highway 101 widening project, county Supervisor Salud Carbajal said it was evident the state agency was not well-prepared.

"Common Sense 101 actually provided the analysis that they did, which was compelling," said Mr. Carbajal, who represents Santa Barbara County's 1st District. "But Caltrans was not in the position to specifically refute or corroborate. It was evident they haven't done a specific analysis."

Caltrans' plans to remove left-side ramps in the Montecito area has been a source of disagreement between residents and the transportation agency.

In the fourth and final phase of the Highway 101 project, Caltrans plans to build a part-time carpool lane in each direction for about 10 miles, from Carpinteria south of Casitas Pass Road to the Cabrillo/Hot Springs Road interchange, and replace left-side ramps with right-side ramps.

Common Sense 101 proposes keeping the existing left-side onramps and offramps at the Sheffield and Hot Springs/Cabrillo interchanges and shortening the length of the high-occupancy vehicle lane.

However, Caltrans considers left-side ramps to be unsafe and is systematically removing them throughout the state.

Describing the meeting as "revealing," Mr. Carbajal said it was disappointing to see the state agency relying on old and minimal data to determine whether the ramps are safe.

"It was quite interesting to see such safety emphasized from old data rather than specific analysis," he said. "And now that old data is being refuted."

Emphasizing the need to build a project with integrity, Mr. Carbajal said he doesn't know what the next step is but hopes Caltrans will complete its analysis.

Caltrans officials released a prepared statement following Friday's meeting.

"Our project team and management have proceeded with great care in attempting to move this project forward. We have listened and will continue to participate in a dialogue that will result in a project that will improve mobility and ease congestion in this corridor," the statement read.

Additional information is expected to be released next week.

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Immigration agents swoop in at controversial sentencing

By ANGEL PACHECO
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

With a child molestation charge dismissed in a plea

When the blues, Harper style, came to town

Diplomatic gathering



MIKE ELIASON/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

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'Spanish and American companies can align together'



MIKE ELIASON/NEWS-PRESS

Prince Felipe of Asturias, heir to the throne of Spain, meets with members of the Presidio Soldiers re-enactment group during a reception Friday at the Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore.

■ FORUM

Continued from Page A1

nations.”

U.S. officials joining Mr. Menendez in the forum include Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va.; Rep. Ed Royce, R-Fullerton, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman; Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman; and U.S. Ambassador to Spain James Costos.

The Spanish delegation is headed by Prince Felipe of Asturias, heir

to the Spanish throne, and Princess Letizia; Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo, minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; Ana Pastor, minister of Public Works; and Jose Manuel Soria, minister of Industry, Energy and Tourism.

Engaging more than 100 guests in a historic narrative of Santa Barbara on the bus ride from the Bacara Resort to the Santa Barbara Mission, David Bolton, executive director of California Missions Foundation, set the tone for the evening's events.

Javier Colas, vice president of

Medtronic in Spain and Portugal, listened carefully and acknowledged the significance of Spain and United States collaboration.

“It's very important to understand how America and Spain can work together, specifically on health care issues,” said Mr. Colas, who is president of the technology and health foundation for the council.

“Spanish and American companies can align together with objectives in developing goals in health care,” he said, “especially in this time of economic recovery.”

Recognizing the profound importance of the two countries coming together once a year, Anton Smith, counselor for Economic Affairs for the U.S. Embassy, took in the sites with his colleagues.

“This is a crucial opportunity for the Spanish to reacquaint themselves with California,” said Mr. Smith. “To come, not just as tourists, but to build bridges — economic and commercial bridges.”

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