

Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey
Weekly Witness | March 20, 2017

In this week's text we encounter Jesus healing a man who was born blind. Jesus gives this man his sight, teaching a lesson about healing, faith, and the role of those who are understood as outcasts in society. This man is a beggar with no way of earning a living in the ancient world because of his disability. Yet he courageously speaks of his encounter with Jesus in the face of skepticism—he tells his story over and over again to all who ask or are willing to listen.

People have been gathering at our NJ congressmen's offices over the past weeks to share their stories of healing and of the need for affordable health care, hoping to influence the powerful people of our day. They speak of the miracles of modern day medicine and its incredible financial costs. They bear witness to a God who desires all people to live lives free of addiction, chronic illness, and suffering.

This past week the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office came out with its report on the proposed legislation to replace the ACA. The report is devastating: 24 million Americans will lose health insurance in the next decade if this bill passes. And the wealthiest will get a tax cut.

In New Jersey, the greatest harm would be caused by repealing the Medicaid expansion, which would terminate health coverage for about 550,000 low-income New Jerseyans and cost the state about \$3 billion in federal funds each year. Participation in the Medicaid program increased by 12,000 in the enrollment period that just ended, demonstrating the urgent need for this coverage.

In addition, about 300,000 New Jerseyans who signed up for a plan in the marketplace would lose their coverage, and with it a billion dollars in federal funds that pay for premium subsidies to make insurance affordable. That is a total \$4 billion loss to New Jersey which would result in an estimated loss of about 86,000 jobs and the further suffering of God's people.

Seeing our way through this very complex issue of health care for all is difficult. But what is clear is that illness is not a sin and health care is a human right. This Sunday's reading illustrates how the Son of Man came to the world to heal the world, so that all might have sight and believe. As followers of this Healer, we must continue to speak about the rights of all New Jerseyans to access care, so that all might know abundant life.

What you and your congregation can do:

Call or visit your congressman's office. Tell your story of health, healing, and the need for access affordable care. Be respectful and courteous about articulating God's intention for health for all of God's people. Join the conversation, share your witness!

**Repealing the Affordable Care Act
Would Devastate New Jersey**

- **1.1 million** residents would lose benefits
- **\$4.2 billion** in federal funding would be lost each year
 - **86,000 jobs** would be lost
- **777** people would die due to lost insurance

Medicare Donut Hole

- **212,000** seniors & disabled people would lose drugs
- **\$262.8 million** in federal funding would be lost each year

Marketplace

- **289,000** residents would lose coverage
- **\$1 billion** in federal funding would be lost each year

Medicaid Expansion

- **550,000** adults would lose Medicaid
- **\$3 billion** in federal funding would be lost each year

Source: NJPP analysis of federal and state data, as well as other reports. Full methodology online at njpp.org/healthcare/acarepeal2017



NEW JERSEY POLICY PERSPECTIVE NJPP.ORG