



THE FLORIDA SENATE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

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By Senator Joe Negron and Representative Richard Corcoran

For more than two years, the country has debated the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). The law has been discussed, scrutinized, politicized, litigated, and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Americans remain sharply divided on the matter, specifically on the role of the Federal government over our personal choices. Much remains unclear about the new law. States have collectively posed hundreds of questions, and the answers trickling out of Washington, D.C. have led to more uncertainty and confusion.

What is clear is that states are now required to choose whether to establish a health insurance exchange or allow the Federal government to create and control an exchange. Florida, like every state in the union, must decide how to respond to the law. We also must decide whether to expand Medicaid eligibility to provide government-financed healthcare to more Floridians.

How should Florida proceed? Should we set up a state exchange? Will state exchanges gain any meaningful control over federal mandates on Floridians? Given the sweeping nature of this new network of government programs, the cost to small businesses and families, and the implication to individuals' health care choices, we believe it is critical that the Legislature do everything we can to gather the facts before we make such important and far-reaching decisions.

That is why this month Senate President Don Gaetz and House Speaker Will Weatherford formed Select Committees on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. These committees will launch comprehensive assessments of the impact this law on Florida. The committees will assess the state's options under the Act and make recommendations to lawmakers. They will evaluate what, if any, actions are necessary to keep costs down, preserve competition, and protect Florida's consumers. The Committees' review and recommendations will focus on protecting individual choice, limiting regulatory burdens, and promoting better value in health care purchasing.

In addition, the Select Committees will evaluate the state's option for Medicaid expansion. We will examine the immediate and long-term financial effects on all Floridians. We also want to understand how expanding the program will impact our ability to fulfill our responsibility to the entire state including education, public safety, and the environment.

As leaders of these committees, we look forward to hearing from a wide range of Floridians and experts on the best path for our state. We believe it would be irresponsible to make any quick decisions without understanding all the impacts our choices. The Legislature will take the time necessary to consider the consequences of each decision.

We will use committee meetings scheduled in the next two months to prepare for the full debate during the legislative session convening on March 5, 2013. We will conduct our meetings and deliberations in a transparent manner with public notice so legislators may be available to receive input from constituents. Floridians will be heard before we make our decisions.

While we do not know today with certainty what the best path for Florida will be, we are fully committed to gathering the facts and making decisions in the best interest of our state. Floridians deserve no less.

Joe Negron, a Republican Senator from the Stuart, is the Chairman of the Florida Senate Select Committee on PPACA. Richard Corcoran, a Republican House member from Land 'O Lakes, is the Chairman of the Florida House Select Committee on PPACA.