

Consumer Voices for Coverage Telephone Press Conference  
Wednesday, February 24, 2010

***Statement of J. Kelly Conklin***

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Executive Committee Member of the National Main Street Alliance

In the past few weeks, my architectural woodworking shop has been hit by a 124% increase in our health insurance premiums, jumping to \$654 a month for each of nine employees from \$291. This rate hike is beyond comprehension and unfortunately, my business is not an anomaly. Many other small business members of the Main Street Alliance have reported rate increases upwards of 30%. Meanwhile the insurance companies are raking in record profits.

This is unacceptable and Main Street cannot afford to wait any longer. We need Congress to act now to protect small businesses and consumers. The President's proposed Health Insurance Rate Authority is a step in the right direction, but we must be sure that it has the necessary teeth to enforce its decisions and reign in these outrageous health care premium increases. This rate authority is one of many tools that are needed to solve our nation's health care crisis. In addition to a strong national exchange, public health insurance option, shared employer commitment, guaranteed coverage, and affordability the President's proposal will provide businesses like mine a fighting chance.

We need Congress to act now to reign in the insurance companies and provide relief to small businesses. Unless we take this first step and pass reform, Main Street businesses will continue to be held hostage to the health insurance industry. We need to take our country and our health care system back. We need reform now.