



# **ELECTION 2012**

## **WHAT'S AT STAKE: HEALTH CARE & IMMIGRANT RIGHTS**

*Access to health care and immigrant rights remain top concerns for many Americans, including Asian Americans & Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (AA&NHOPIs). During this election, candidates have hotly debated both health care reform and immigration policies. This document summarizes the current standing of these key federal programs and policies, and how they impact AA&NHOPIs and the community health centers that serve them.*

### **Protecting Community Health through the Affordable Care Act**

The recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling to uphold the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) means many AA&NHOPIs will benefit from the law. In fact, the ACA will expand health insurance options to 2 million AA&NHOPIs.<sup>i</sup> Already, more than 3 million young adults under the age of 26 and others with pre-existing conditions are benefitting from the law.<sup>ii</sup>

- **Medicaid:** The Supreme Court ruled that Medicaid expansion is optional for states. According to recent AAPCHO analysis, in the 16 states whose leaders have yet to proclaim their intent to expand Medicaid, **more than 630,000 uninsured AA&NHOPi residents and 113 medically-underserved AA&NHOPi counties are at risk of not benefitting from Medicaid expansion.**<sup>iii</sup> Community health centers also rely on Medicaid reimbursements for a significant portion of their revenue.
- **Medicare:** Medicare is an important program for the elderly and infirm. The ACA helps boost the longevity and financial security of the program by creating savings of \$716 billion through cuts to provider payments. Then, the ACA uses the savings to fill in the “donut hole” (or coverage gap) in prescription costs so that more seniors can afford their medicine without paying out of pocket costs. Medicare is now expected to be financially solvent through 2024, allowing more seniors to benefit from the program.<sup>iv</sup>
- **Women’s Health:** Although, the ACA maintains strict prohibitions on federal funding of abortion services, it eliminates many barriers preventing women from obtaining necessary preventive care services such as pap tests, mammograms, contraceptives, and other critical prevention services. Now, under the ACA, women can obtain these and other critical preventive health care without paying any co-payments.

## Immigrant Rights

Two important decisions on immigration were made over the summer, raising the stakes on immigration heading into November's election. The first came when President Obama issued a directive to the Department of Homeland Security, which created a path to citizenship for many of the youth who would have benefited if Congress passed the DREAM Act<sup>v</sup>. The second decision came when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the majority of Arizona's controversial immigration law. The Court declared that states did not have the power to enforce federal laws in local jurisdictions, pushing back state legislative attempts to regulate immigration policies. However, it is unclear what action, if any, Congress will take on immigration reform after the election.

## Engaging the AA&NHOPHI Vote

The AA&NHOPHI population is the fastest growing in America, which means that AA&NHOPHIs are an increasingly important voting block in a growing number of states around the country and have the potential to significantly impact the outcome of the election as the "margin of victory." However, **only 55% of those eligible to vote have registered to do so** and **only 86% of registered voters cast a vote** in the last election! If we want to be heard, we must register and vote!

## Know YOUR Right to VOTE!

In a democracy, the most fundamental right is for citizens to choose their leaders in free, fair, and regular elections. Recently, some states have begun enacting voter identification laws, which may make it more difficult for eligible voters to cast their vote on Election Day. This makes it more important for eligible voters to register and know your rights. Community health centers are here to help to ensure that all eligible voters can cast a vote on Election Day. Protecting the right for our community to vote is key to keeping our communities healthy!

**VOTE ON NOV. 6<sup>TH</sup>!**



*This fall, the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO) and its member community health centers worked with communities across the nation to provide voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement activities for the AA&NHOPHI community. This is an important effort to uphold the values of democracy that community health centers hold. For more information, contact Albert Ayson, Jr. at AAPCHO at [aayson@aapcho.org](mailto:aayson@aapcho.org).*

<sup>i</sup> Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum. Why Protecting Medicaid Matters for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. Washington, DC: APIAHF; October 2011

<sup>ii</sup> The White House. Health Care & You. Washington, DC: White House; accessed October 2012. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/healthreform/relief-for-americans-and-businesses>

<sup>iii</sup> Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations. Medicaid Expansion After the Supreme Court's Health Care Decision. Washington, DC: AAPCHO; September 2012.

<sup>iv</sup> The Commonwealth Fund. New Estimates of Presidential Candidates' Health Care Plans. New York, NY: Commonwealth Fund; October 2, 2012. [www.commonwealthfund.org](http://www.commonwealthfund.org)

<sup>v</sup> The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, or "DREAM Act," would provide a pathway to legal status for the thousands of undocumented students who graduate from high school each year. <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dream-act>