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Institute director calls high court decision 'severe blow' to federal limits

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By Andrew Thomason Illinois Statehouse News

SPRINGFIELD — The U.S. Supreme Court [narrowly upheld President Barack Obama's health care overhaul legislation Thursday](#), with the key vote coming from Chief Justice [John Roberts](#).

The most controversial part of the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#), the requirement for everyone to have health insurance, was upheld by the court. The court's 5-4 ruling stated that fining a person for not buying health insurance amounted to a tax, which was within Congress' constitutional powers.

“Today's Supreme Court decision helps to strengthen our nation's tattered social fabric and provides hope that constitutional law and democracy matters,” Jim Duffett, executive director of the [Campaign for Better Health Care](#), which advocates for more accessible, cheaper health care, said. “People will start to see health-care costs stabilized.”

John Tillman, executive director of the [Illinois Policy Institute](#), a right-leaning think tank, disagreed, saying the Affordable Care Act will strain the health-care system as the federal government struggles to come up with the money to pay for it. Tillman said the law as is will force “children with throat cancer or other serious conditions to compete with even more people for fewer and fewer doctors.”

The court narrowed the part of the law that would greatly expand Medicaid, the state-federal health care program. The Obama administration had threatened to take away Medicaid funding if states didn't expand their Medicaid rolls by opening the program to more people.

U.S. Supreme Court deems Obamacare constitutional The court stated that essentially states can opt to not expand Medicaid without the risk of losing federal dollars they are already getting, only new dollars promised under the expansion.

Many on the right opposed to the law are still pushing for a full repeal.

“The Supreme Court’s decision to uphold ObamaCare – and specifically the individual mandate – was a severe blow to restoring Constitutional limits on federal power,” Tillman said. “Congress must repeal all of ObamaCare and replace it with reforms that put patients first.”

Even if the law survives additional attacks, Thursday’s ruling was only the start.

“It is impossible to enact the act as written,” Robert Slayton, president of the [Illinois State Association of Health Underwriters](#), which lobbies on behalf of health insurers, said. Congress “will spend the next 10 years modifying the act to make it work the way it needs to work.”