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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee receives report regarding Affordable Care Act exemption for Native Americans

WINDOW ROCK - On Monday, the Health, Education and Human Services Committee received a report on the Affordable Care Act regarding upcoming public training seminars to educate Navajo people on ACA revisions pertaining to tax exemptions.

The training seminars will take place in various locations throughout the Navajo Nation from July 28 to August 1, according to Navajo Division of Health director, Larry Curley.

EHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) stated that the Indian Health Service urge Navajo people to sign-up for exemption to avoid potential tax penalties.

"I do not want our constituencies out in the chapters to say 'my government did not tell me it was important for me to file for exemption,'" stated Delegate Hale.

In accordance with the ACA, beginning in 2014, individuals are required to have health coverage or pay a tax penalty, unless they qualify for an exemption. Failure to file for exemption can lead to a tax penalty which can result in incurring interest fees.

"There are more exemptions coming up where people need to identify themselves as a member of a Federally Recognized Tribe. These are requirements being brought up especially if applicants are over and above the federal poverty line," stated Curley.

In March 2010, President Obama signed the ACA to establish comprehensive health insurance improvements to make health insurance coverage more affordable and accessible for Americans nationwide, including Native Americans and Alaskan Natives.

"There is no clear protocol nor is there a step-by-step process from the IRS when dealing with the exemption issue," said Delegate Hale. "If you do not file exemption, they are going to fine you."

Delegate Hale added that it is important for young Navajos to assist the elderly and encouraged them to take their parents and grandparents to the upcoming seminars.

According to the report, the training seminars are a joint collaboration project between the Navajo Division of Health, Navajo Indian Health Service, and the National Indian Health Board.

"In looking at the bigger picture, the ACA expands much more beyond than just filling out forms. These seminars will do the best they can to inform the Navajo people," stated Curley.

Dates and locations for the ACA training seminars can be accessed at:

http://www.nihb.org/tribalhealthreform/ai1ec_event/nihbnavajo-area-tribal-affordable-care-act-training/

To access additional information and the exemption application, please visit:

<http://marketplace.cms.gov/getofficialresources/publications-and-articles/tribal-exemption.pdf>

HEHSC members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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