President Obama’s Affordable Care Act stands, millions more Americans will have health coverage. Yesterday, the Supreme Court upheld President Obama’s Affordable Care Act (ACA), including provisions requiring able Americans to secure health insurance. Chief Justice Roberts—a Bush appointee—joined the majority in deeming the law constitutional. According to Chief Justice Roberts, “the mandate is not a legal command to buy insurance.” The court, however, did find one Medicaid provision of the law coercive; the area of the Act that provides extra funding for states to spend on Medicaid as long as they enroll additional members. The requirement would have expanded coverage to 16-17 million new individuals, and allowed the federal government to cut funding from states that refused to enroll more participants. Limiting this provision will now let states opt out of the Medicaid expansion. In prior comments, Justice Kagan said: “It’s...federal money...to...spend on poor people’s health care. It doesn’t sound coercive to me...” A major impact of the court’s decision is the 129 million people with pre-existing conditions and millions of middle class families who will have the security of affordable health coverage. To date, the ACA is responsible for covering 17 million children with pre-existing conditions; allowing 6.6 million young adults to have the security of coverage until age 26; saving $10.7 billion in Medicare fraud and abuse, while preserving the benefits seniors have earned; and opening opportunities for 86 million Americans to receive free preventive services like mammograms for women or wellness visits for seniors. According to President Obama, “no illness or accident should lead to any family’s financial ruin... Whatever the politics, today’s decision was a victory for people all over this country whose lives will be more secure because of this law.

Romney vows to keep hammering at ‘Obamacare.’ This week Romney speculated that people weren’t “sleeping real well” at the White House. He argued that “if Obamacare [ACA] is not deemed constitutional, then the first three and a half years of this president’s term will have been wasted on something that has not helped the American people.” Ironically, the ACA is largely based on the Massachusetts healthcare program that Romney created; in fact, he was initially supportive of an individual mandate, including on a national level. “He [Romney]’s the one person who deserves the most credit for the national plan we ended up with,” argued the MIT economist who developed the core of the Massachusetts plan. Choosing to recast his history with the Massachusetts healthcare program, Romney criticizes the President’s agenda as “an attack on free enterprise, an attack on economic freedom.” To rouse his conservative crowds, he describes the ACA as an “unfolding disaster for the American economy, a budget-busting entitlement, and a dramatic new federal intrusion into our lives.” Romney has promised to “stop it in its tracks on Day One, and get it repealed.” Following the Supreme Court’s ruling, Romney downplayed the significance of the decision. “What the court did do today is that Obamacare does not violate the Constitution. What they did not do is to say that Obamacare is good law or that it is good policy. Obamacare was bad policy yesterday. It's bad policy today. Obamacare was a bad law yesterday. It is bad law today.”

NEA Believes

- Health reform should provide universal, quality, affordable health care coverage: it should guarantee coverage for the uninsured; control premium and services costs, regardless of income or employment status; result in comprehensive health care coverage including long-term care services and choice of providers; and include preventative and rehabilitative programs.
- When children and students of all ages lack necessary medical and dental services, serious impediments to the learning process occur. Ensuring quality, affordable health care is vital to great public schools. Children were the big winners of the Supreme Court’s decision. Last year as many as 72,000 uninsured children received health care coverage because of the Affordable Care Act.

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2 Supreme court ruling on healthcare law, The Guardian, 6/28/2012
4 Supreme Court Upholds President Obama's Health Care Reform, The White House, 6/28/2012
5 Remarks by the President on Supreme Court Ruling on the Affordable Care Act, The White House, 6/28/2012
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7 Supreme Court decision on polarizing health care law looms, CNN, 6/28/2012
8 Lessons from the Fall of RomneyCare, Cato Policy Report, Winter 2008
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10 Romney, Santorui focus on health-care law, LA Times, 3/26/2012
11 On 2-year mark, Romney goes all-out against Obama's health care law, CBS, 3/23/2012
12 Governor Romney on President Obama's Promise of Post-Election "Flexibility" for Russia, Hugh Hewitt, 3/26/2012
13 Romney reacts to health care ruling, renews repeal pledge, CNN, 6/28/2012