Supreme Court Upholds Health Care Act, Individual Mandate

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The individual mandate of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is constitutional, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Thursday morning, the Washington Post reports. The mandate to purchase insurance or pay a penalty was the linchpin of President Obama's health care reform, which is expected to extend medical coverage to more than 30 million citizens who lack health insurance. The Supreme Court ruled the mandate is allowed under Congress's taxing authority. The mandate will help ensure other elements of the ACA, such as allowing young adults to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26 and not permitting insurers to deny benefits to children with preexisting conditions. While the court ruled that the ACA could expand Medicaid benefits and broaden the program's minimum eligibility requirements, it struck down the provision allowing the government to withdraw existing Medicaid funding to states that failed to comply with that expansion; this may render the Medicaid extension toothless in practice. Most provisions of the ACA don't take effect until 2014.

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