Medicaid expansion decision moves closer to Missouri voters

By Sandra Jordan Of The St. Louis American
Mar 26, 2020

The Medicaid Expansion Campaign, Missouri Health Care for All, announced that it has met the signature petition threshold and will submit the required number of valid signatures to the Secretary of State's office in advance of the early May deadline to allow November 2020 voters to decide whether Missouri will expand Medicaid.

“We are very excited that signature collection for Medicaid expansion has gone so well, that we will be able to submit signatures by the deadline,” said Jen Bersdale, executive director of Missouri Health Care for All. “Missourians have waited far too long for the health and economic benefits that will come from this policy.”

Signatures must be submitted by 5 p.m. on May 3. State law requires petitions to have a minimum number of signatures in six of eight congressional districts, based on the number of votes cast in the last gubernatorial election.

Nationwide, Medicaid provides health coverage to 63.9 million eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults and people with disabilities. Medicaid is administered by states, according to federal requirements and is funded jointly by states and the federal government.
“We’ll continue fighting every day to expand healthcare coverage to 230,000 Missourians, save rural hospitals, and bring our tax dollars home from Washington,” A.J. Bokelman, campaign manager for Healthcare for Missouri sent to supporters.

The spread of COVID-19 disease from the new coronavirus illuminates the intense need for accessible health care in The Show Me State and across the nation.

“We believe the work you’ve contributed will change the lives of hundreds of thousands of Missourians,” an announcement to supporters reads. “This wouldn't be possible without every single person who showed up, made a call, talked to strangers, and managed the behind-the-scenes work through this campaign.

Bersdale told the *American*, while Medicaid expansion has long been an urgent need for Missouri, this need has never been more critical than it is now. “Both the public health crisis and the economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic are making it more clear than ever why *every* Missourian needs Medicaid to be expanded,” she said. “Of course, the estimated 230,000 uninsured people who would gain coverage need us to pass Medicaid expansion. But it is not just about those who would qualify. During this pandemic, we would all be safer if every person experiencing symptoms could seek testing and treatment free of fear that they will be turned away or forced into medical debt. Without this assurance, people with mild symptoms are far more likely to continue to go to work, especially if they are one of the millions of Americans who risk losing everything if they miss a week's pay.”

Missouri is one of only 14 states that have not expanded Medicaid for its residents.