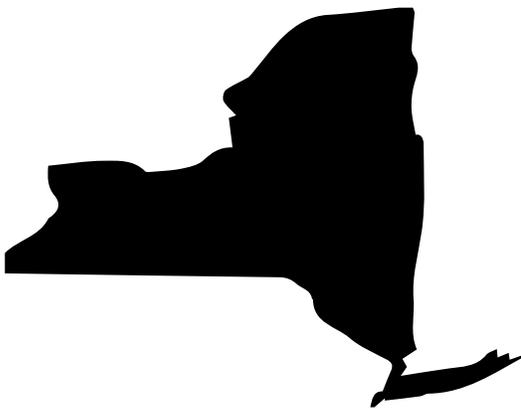


SIIA Launches “2nd Half” Campaign To Support NY Groups of 51-100



A couple of months prior to opening day of the 2017-18 New York Legislature in Albany, SIIA launched the second half of its campaign to protect stop-loss plans for the state’s self-insured employer groups of 51-100, which are deemed vital to continue viable employee benefit plans for thousands of New Yorkers.

“We considered the time between the end of the 2016 legislative session and the beginning of the new session as halftime in our campaign to protect self-insured employers’ health plans,” said Adam Brackemyre, SIIA vice president for state government relations. *“It’s important to be ready to hit the ground running when the new legislature convenes in January.”*

At issue is the repeal of an earlier New York bill that would end the access to stop-loss insurance for self-insuring employers of groups of 51-100 that was passed to bring the state into compliance with definitions under the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA). Earlier this year SIIA succeeded in supporting legislation that pushed back the prohibition until 2018 for existing stop-loss plans. “Now our focus is to block this prohibition entirely when the temporary fix expires,” Brackemyre said.

To launch next year’s campaign, SIIA convened a meeting of two dozen members in New York City where they discussed the best ways to leverage the political strength of the state’s small and medium-sized employers as well as the self-insurance industry.

“Everyone is familiar with the concept of grassroots political advocacy, and we want to add the element of ‘grasstops’ activism by business people who are well positioned to influence members of the New York Senate and Assembly in their home towns,” said lobbyist Tom Faist of Albany who assists SIIA in communicating with the New York Legislature. “If SIIA members can convince enough legislators to support this issue to their chamber and committee leaders of the Senate and Assembly, we’ll stand a better chance of success.”

“There’s really no reason that every SIIA member in New York can’t participate in this campaign,” said Larry Thompson, chairman of SIIA’s Government Relations Committee, who led the New York City meeting. He said that the political strength of SIIA members can be multiplied many times by bringing self-insuring employers into the campaign.



Left to Right: Tom Gibbons, Swiss Re, Dr. Aalap Majmudar, Signal Health, George Breen, Ethicare Advisors, Kate Thurson, Pareto Health

Thompson's outline of SIIA members' political advocacy tactics begins with identifying employers and union benefits plans that would be affected by the stop-loss prohibition and mobilizing them to contact their own members of the legislature.

“Key people in each constituent organization can appreciate that it is in their self-interest to support SIIA’s efforts to protect their employee benefits plans. The flow of communications will include SIIA-developed model letters and talking points for use in making the case to legislators.”

Thompson believes the New York campaign is indicative of increasing political activity for SIIA in federal and state government. “I believe 2017 will be one of our most active years since we joined in the successful effort to forestall Hillarycare back in 1994,” he said. “Everyone knows that something has to be done about the ACA where many will lose health coverage because of higher costs. Self-insurance will continue to face mounting opposition by some state insurance commissioners and the traditional for-profit health insurance industry.”

In New York it will be important to convince legislators that the prohibition of stop-loss programs for groups of 51-100 will have devastating impact on employer plans serving many thousands of employees and dependents.

“Availability of stop-loss insurance is what enables employers to self-insure,” says Dr. Aalap Majmudar of Signal Health, a care management company headquartered in New York City with board-certified medical specialists located throughout the U.S., who participated in SIIA’s New York meeting. “Our mission is to serve the most severe patient cases according to the best practices of leading treatment centers with local geographic convenience and high-value outcomes.”

Signal Health focuses on smaller employee groups. “These can be the most flexible plans that allow for the greatest innovation in care,” says Dr. Majmudar. “They really drive the market for optimized, value-based medical outcomes.”

“We care for the sickest of the sick where we can provide the most value to self-insured employers. Without stop-loss insurance, those employers would be forced back into the traditional market where they would experience vastly more expensive fee-for-service healthcare.” Dr. Majmudar said his SIIA-member organization looks forward to participating in the campaign to repeal New York’s prohibition of stop-loss insurance for groups of 51-100.

SIIA members who wish to join the state government relations advocacy team are invited to contact Adam Brackemyre at the Washington, DC, office, (202) 463-8161 or abrackemyre@siaa.org. ■