



Institute for Policy Studies

FACT SHEET: RECA's Deadly Tradeoff

The “Big Beautiful Bill” tied a long-overdue expansion of RECA to cruel and unnecessary cuts in health care coverage.

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As the U.S. implements a long-overdue expansion of the *Radiation Exposure Compensation Act* (RECA) as part of the so-called “Big Beautiful Bill,” we compiled this fact sheet to better understand the broader implications of the legislation — particularly what it means for health care access in the very states RECA aims to support.

The data focuses on 16 RECA-eligible states — those whose residents were directly impacted by nuclear testing, uranium mining, or radioactive fallout. These are the communities that lived through radiation exposure, and many continue to suffer from long-term health impacts, including elevated cancer rates, respiratory disease, and birth defects.

But while the legislation renews and expands RECA eligibility, its cuts to Medicaid and threats to Americans with Affordable Care Act plans will result in millions of Americans losing health coverage and their rural hospitals — including many of the same people impacted by radiation exposure.

To examine the impact, I pulled a list of states from statements on RECA eligibility from the [U.S. Senate](#). I then cross-referenced those states with previously published data from the [Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform](#), which provides state-by-state numbers for rural hospitals at risk of closure, and the [Senate Joint Economic Committee Minority](#), which offered state-by-state estimates of Americans expected to lose Medicaid or ACA coverage under the Republican budget. (The latter resource looked at the House version of the legislation, the most recent state-by-state analysis available at the time of publication.)

Overall, I found that in these 16 RECA-eligible states, over 240 rural hospitals are at risk of closing — and 81 of those are at immediate risk. At the same time, an estimated 3.9 million people across these states stand to lose health insurance. This includes over 1.4 million people losing Medicaid coverage and another 2.5 million losing Affordable Care Act coverage.

This data makes one thing painfully clear: the same populations finally being acknowledged for their suffering are now being put at risk again — this time through cuts to the care they need to survive.

This fact sheet was created to underscore the contradiction at the heart of this moment. While the expansion of RECA is long overdue and absolutely necessary, it must not come at the expense of basic healthcare infrastructure in rural and low-income communities.

RECA-Eligible State	Number of Rural Hospitals at Risk of Closing	Number of Rural Hospitals at Immediate Risk of Closing	Estimated Number of People Losing Affordable Care Act Coverage	Estimated Number of People Losing Medicaid Coverage	Estimated Total Number of People Losing Insurance
Alaska	3	1	10,093	27,007	37,101
Arizona	4	2	148,584	193,980	342,564
Colorado	11	3	99,219	126,389	225,608
Idaho	8	1	41,226	27,554	68,780
Kentucky	16	4	34,202	136,336	170,538
Missouri	25	10	146,468	103,929	250,397
Nevada	5	1	38,878	67,888	106,766
New Mexico	9	4	24,718	79,001	103,719
North Dakota	13	4	15,069	8,127	23,196
Oregon	8	3	49,064	134,669	183,734
South Dakota	9	3	19,220	12,746	31,967
Tennessee	17	13	225,802	69,765	295,567
Texas	87	22	1,393,105	210,125	1,603,230
Utah	0	0	148,185	32,085	180,270
Washington	18	6	108,262	198,050	306,312
Wyoming	7	4	16,383	3,151	19,534
Total	240	81	2,518,478	1,430,802	3,949,283

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