



We are happy to bring back The Real Deal, our weekly newsletter prepared by the Realities of Single Payer campaign. It is intended to keep coalition members informed about single payer, the New York Health Act, and related health care news and legislative developments in the state.

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COVID-19 and Single Payer

Supporters of the New York Health Act are arguing that the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the dire need for the legislation. They cite the significant numbers of New Yorkers who lost their jobs and health insurance as a primary reason. They also claim that “a lot” of people delayed getting treatment for COVID because they lacked insurance and that “many” people died as a result.

While, undoubtedly, some New Yorkers lost their coverage due to pandemic-related job loss, the current system of public health insurance and subsidies allowed many to get different coverage. In fact, through November, New York’s Medicaid program saw an increase in more than 680,000 enrollees since February. Health plans implemented several changes to help New Yorkers including no-cost COVID testing, waiving co-pays, and expanding telehealth coverage.

2021 Session Begins

The 2021 New York State Legislative Session kicked off this past week as COVID-19 continues to impact every aspect of our lives.

Members of the New York State Senate and Assembly are [scheduled](#) to meet for a total of 60 session days, running through June 10. The legislature changed its rules to allow for virtual voting and meetings, and we saw that in action on Wednesday, with both houses featuring only a handful of members in person while the rest were reporting via Zoom.

The pandemic and increasing deficit will be the main issue for the Governor and Legislature so we will see how it influences policy, especially health care.

Citing New York's huge deficit, estimated at \$15 billion in the current fiscal year and an additional \$16 billion in the fiscal year beginning on April 1st, Governor Cuomo on Wednesday announced support for two measures that would bring in new revenue: mobile sports betting and recreational adult-use marijuana. He is also hopeful that a Democratic-led federal government will provide more funding to the State.

Senate and Assembly Democrats meanwhile are calling for tax increases on millionaires and billionaires. Senate Republicans are asking for a "reset" of New York, with goals of restarting local economies and restoring fiscal responsibility in State government spending.

Progressive advocates, including those in support of the New York Health Act, are pushing for a package of measures designed to increase taxes on the wealthy, including increasing taxes on billionaires, a tax on inherited wealth, a capital gains tax and taxes for Wall Street and corporations.

Governor Cuomo will deliver his virtual State of the State address beginning today at 11:30 AM. He said it will be a "totally different" speech compared to years past and is stretching it out over the next [four days](#). One health care-related priority on his agenda is expanding [telehealth services](#).



New York State Legislative Session Calendar

January — June 2021



The New York State legislative session calendar establishes a schedule for the 2021 legislative session and provides dates important to the legislative process. The session calendar is intended to afford Members flexibility in conducting legislative business in Albany and planning activities within their home districts. The session calendar will foster orderly and timely consideration of legislation. Unforeseen events may require modification of the session calendar.

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January 6 2021 Legislative Session convenes
January 18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
January 19 Final Day for Submission of Executive Budget

February 15 Presidents' Day
April 1 Beginning of new Fiscal Year
May 31 Memorial Day

 Indicates session day

New Members in the Legislature



While we won't actually be seeing much of them in person, the 2021 Legislature features [14 new members](#) in the Senate and [25 new members](#) in the Assembly.

There are 43 Democrats in the 63-person Senate - the first Democratic supermajority ever in that chamber. Democrats also hold a 106-person supermajority in the Assembly. A supermajority in both houses means Democrats will have enough votes to override a veto. An override is rare but it may give legislators leverage over Governor Cuomo.

Many of the new progressive members ran on single payer or a "public health insurance option." This session will require more education to the public about what those policy proposals actually mean and the impact they would have on New Yorkers.

Leadership remains the same in the Senate for Democrats with Andrea Stewart-Cousins as Majority Leader and Michael Gianaris as Deputy Majority Leader, while Republicans have tapped Rob Ortt as Minority Leader and Andrew Lanza as Deputy Minority Leader. In the Assembly, Carl Heastie remains Speaker and Crystal Peoples-Stokes as Majority Leader, while William Barclay remains Minority Leader.

New York Health Act Bill Tracker



[\(A.5248A/S.3577A\)](#)

Last May, Assemblyman Gottfried and Senator Rivera introduced amendments to their single payer legislation. While they indicated that the changes were aimed at addressing concerns that were raised during the hearings held the previous Fall, many of the new provisions are likely to increase the cost of the program. The changes include the following:

- Adds fiduciary duties and obligations on the NY Health Plan
- Requires NY Health Plan to consider current additional factors when determining provider reimbursement rates, to ensure rate adequacy, including FairHealth's Usual & Customary Reimbursement Rates, provider experience, complexity of services, and geographical factors.
- Clarifies payments provided on Fee-For-Service basis until other methodologies are established.
- Exempts first \$25,000 of income from taxation
- Exempts first \$50,000 of income for any Medicare enrollee from taxation
- Expand eligibility to out-of-state individuals who are employed or self-employed full-time in New York
- Provides DOH with discretion to require providers participating in the NY Health Plan to also accept Medicaid, Child Health Plus, or Medicare
- Creates mechanism intended to ensure that clinics continue to receive financial benefit currently receive from the 340B Drug Program
- Directs the NY Health Board to develop proposals to incorporate motor vehicle and Veteran's health insurance into the NY Health Plan
- Allows legal settlements including coverage of health care to be reconsidered to allow for payment of NY Health Plan taxes instead of costs previously included in settlement
- Expands enrollee appeals rights to automatically provide external appeal

and Medicaid-like Fair Hearings process for any denials, including eligibility and medical necessity

Action in 2021

While the legislation did not move last year, it enjoyed sponsorship by a comfortable majority of Assembly Democrats and was just one sponsor shy of the 32 Senators needed for passage in the Senate.

With many of the newly elected legislators publicly endorsing the New York Health Act, we will need to continue to be vigilant in our efforts to defeat the legislation. We will know more once the legislation is reintroduced. However, it is clear that we will need to continue our efforts and work with our legislators and Legislative Leadership to urge their opposition to the bill.

Ways to Get Involved

Despite the challenges the State faces due to COVID-19, sponsors of the New York Health Act along with advocates will still be pushing for passage of the bill in 2021. We will be looking at several ways to engage on the issue this year.

In the meantime, these are some options for getting involved right now. If you are interested in any of the following, please [let us know](#).

- Issue a memo in opposition to the NYHA
- Issue a press release on the NYHA
- Write a letter to the editor or an opinion piece in a newspaper

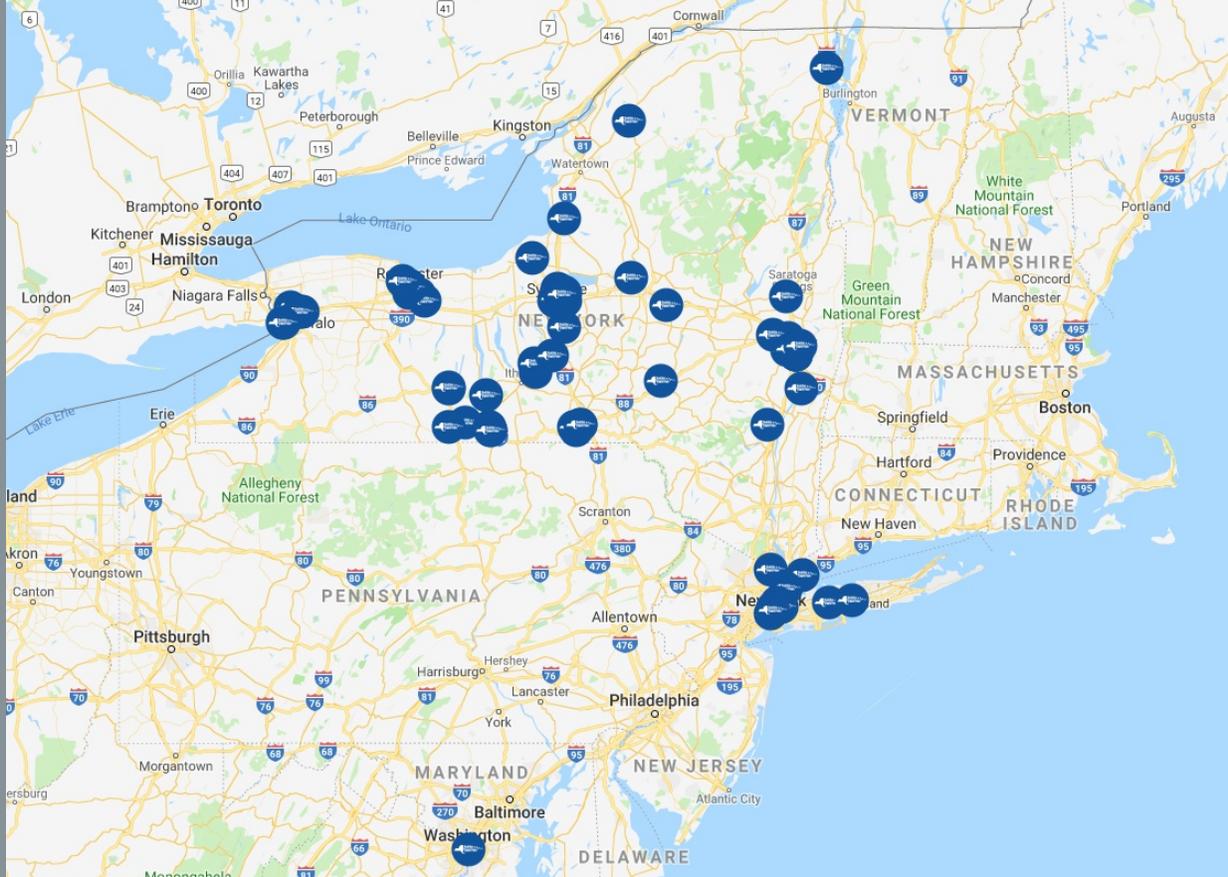
Growing the Coalition

Help us expand our membership in 2021! The coalition is currently 90 members strong. We would like to get to 100 this session.

If you know an organization that also supports allowing a variety of healthcare coverage options rather than forcing all New Yorkers to use a single government-run health insurance program, direct them to the 'Join' section on our website. We are also happy to speak to potential members or provide you with customized materials you can use to recruit potential allies.

Visit our
website





Single Payer in the News

A mix of state and national news about single payer, Medicare for All and other health care related stories.

[Medicare for All May Die in 2021](#)

Forbes

[With New Majority, Here's What Democrats Can \(and Can't\) Do on Health Care](#)

The New York Times

[Opinion: A Single Payer Healthcare System Would Have Made the Pandemic Worse](#)

Times of San Diego

[Letter: COVID Demonstrates Time Has Come for Single Payer Health Care](#)

The Berkshire Eagle

[The Left's Most Naïve Cynics Have Turned on AOC](#)

NY Magazine

[What to Expect in the 2021 State Legislative Session](#)

City & State

[Medicare for All? We All Deserve Much Better](#)

Poughkeepsie Journal

[Progressives Pressure AOC, Other Dems to Force Pelosi's Hand on Medicare for All Vote](#)

Fox News

Realities Resources

Useful Links and Information

[New York State 2021 Legislative Session Calendar](#)

[New York Health Act: Cost vs Tax Increase](#)

[What is ERISA? Does it impact the New York Health Act?](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions about the New York Health Act](#)

[Myths and Facts about the New York Health Act](#)

[Single Payer PowerPoint Presentation](#)

[Sample Opposition Memo](#)

[RAND Study on Single Payer](#)