

State Attorneys General Protecting Medicaid and Affordable Health Coverage

State attorneys general have long played a critical role in safeguarding access to health care for millions of Americans, particularly through vigorous defense of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and opposition to policies that undermine Medicaid. While their legal authority varies by state, attorneys general are uniquely positioned to serve as both the legal and public advocates for the health and well-being of their constituents. In the face of federal and state efforts to restrict health coverage, especially for low-income communities, attorneys general have stepped forward to challenge unlawful policies, defend statutory protections, and push for greater equity in public health systems.

In recent news, in an effort to [fund tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans](#), Congress seeks to enact [work requirements for Medicaid recipients as early as 2027](#). Proposed changes to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act Marketplace would likely result in an [additional 8.6 million Americans going without health insurance](#). Notably, the White House backs [work requirements for Medicaid](#), which have proven [unworkable and expensive in other states](#).

Medicaid work requirements, in particular, exemplify the kind of policy that attorneys general are well-suited to oppose. These requirements [do not improve employment outcomes but rather impose procedural hurdles](#) that result in coverage loss for thousands. The [harms](#) fall most heavily on individuals with disabilities, caregivers, low-wage workers with unstable hours, and those facing systemic barriers to employment. In these instances, attorneys general act as both litigators and advocates—defending their state residents against harmful bureaucratic policies that operate as tools of exclusion.

In the past decade, Democratic state attorneys general have built an impressive record of engagement in litigation and administrative advocacy to protect Medicaid and the ACA. Below is a non-exhaustive list of significant cases:

- ***Texas v. United States and California v. Texas (ACA constitutionality case)***
 - AGs, led by California, [intervened](#) to defend the ACA after the Trump administration declined to do so. Ultimately, the Supreme Court upheld the ACA in 2021, preserving coverage protections for millions.
- ***Stewart v. Azar (Kentucky and Arkansas work requirements)***
 - AGs filed amicus briefs opposing the approval of Medicaid work requirements. Ultimately, the federal courts [blocked](#) the requirements, citing the failure to consider coverage losses.

- ***Becerra v. HHS* (Public charge rule)**
 - AGs, led by California, [challenged](#) the Trump administration's rule that would penalize immigrants for using Medicaid and other public benefits, arguing it would chill enrollment. Ultimately, the rule was [vacated](#).
- ***California v. Azar* (Healthcare refusal rule)**
 - Former California AG [challenged](#) federal regulations allowing states to impose premiums and other cost-sharing measures on Medicaid recipients, arguing they violated statutory protections. Ultimately, the rule was [vacated](#).
- ***New York v. HHS* (ACA Section 1557 nondiscrimination)**
 - AGs, led by New York, [challenged](#) Trump-era rollbacks of ACA nondiscrimination protections based on gender identity and language access.
- **AGs defending Medicaid expansion efforts**
 - The Maine Office of Attorney General [supported](#) efforts to enforce voter-approved Medicaid expansion when the governor refused to implement it.
- ***Massachusetts v. HHS* (Association Health Plan rule)**
 - AGs, led by Massachusetts and New York, [sued](#) the U.S. Department of Labor, challenging its regulation that would allow associations to market low-quality health care plans across the country and avoid the protections for enrollees in the ACA. Ultimately, the rule was [vacated](#).

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