

## Budget Deal Impacts Health Care Reform

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On April 15, 2011, the president signed into law the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011 (the "Continuing Appropriations Act"). The Continuing Appropriations Act, which funds the federal government through September 30, 2011, includes noteworthy changes to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (the "ACA"). Specifically, it eliminates the Free Choice Voucher program (the "Voucher Program") and the Consumer Operated and Oriented Plan program (the "CO-OP Program").

The ACA originally established these programs to do the following:

- *Voucher Program*-Certain low-income employees would have been entitled to receive a "voucher" from their employer to purchase health insurance coverage through an exchange. These employees would have had the choice either to use the voucher or to participate in the employer-sponsored health plan.
- *CO-OP Program*-Grants and loans would have been made available to promote the creation of qualified nonprofit health insurance issuers to offer competitive health plans in the individual and small group markets.
- The Voucher Program and the CO-OP Program were just two of the pieces of the ACA that have been the subject of debate in Congress. There are, of course, various proposals to completely repeal, defund, or delay the entire ACA. Accordingly, companies should continue to pay close attention to this ongoing fight in Congress.

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