

***Broad coalition of business and labor groups endorse Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP Act)***

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) today joined a bipartisan group of lawmakers, including Congressman Phil English (PA-03), in unveiling the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) Act (H.R. 6210). This legislation will make health insurance more available and affordable by allowing small businesses to join together and pool their risk so they can obtain lower premiums, giving tax credits to small businesses that provide employees with health insurance, and stabilizing premium increases by preventing insurance companies from basing their rates on employees' health status and claims experience. Sixty percent of Americans without health insurance come from families where the head of household is self-employed or works for a small business.

A broad coalition of businesses and union groups -- including the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), AARP, and the National Association of Realtors (NAR) -- has endorsed this bill. As a Co-Chair of the New Democrat Health Care Task Force, Congressman Altmire is leading efforts to improve Americans' access to quality, affordable health insurance through prevention, innovation and competition.

**“More than 27 million small business employees do not have health insurance due to high costs and limited availability,”** Altmire said. **“The SHOP Act is bipartisan legislation that has been endorsed by business and labor leaders as a common-sense proposal that will make health care more affordable for America’s small businesses and the self-employed. Enacting these reforms is fundamental to achieving lower health insurance costs, more stability in the market, and expanded plan choices for our nation’s small businesses.”**

The SHOP Act will make health insurance less costly, more predictable, and more accessible for the nation's 47.1 million small business employees and 14.1 million self-employed individuals by:

- Allowing small businesses and the self-employed to band together in a statewide or nationwide pool to obtain lower health insurance prices by spreading their risk over a larger number of participants;
- Keeping prices low by offering a range of private health plans that have to compete for business;
- Providing small business owners with an annual tax credit of up to \$1,000 per employee (\$2,000 for family coverage) if they pay for 60% of their employees' premiums, and a bonus tax credit if they pay for more than 60% of the premiums. Self-employed individuals would get a \$1,800 annual tax credit (\$3,600 for family coverage) to purchase health insurance;

- Cutting down on administrative costs for small businesses – today, small businesses spend almost 25 percent of health insurance premiums on administrative costs, compared to 10 percent for large employers;
- Banning the practice of rating insurance based on an employee's health status and claims experience so that premium increases will be more stable and predictable;
- Providing a website with comparative information about a variety of private health plans; and,
- Enacting accountability measures using existing structures like those used by state insurance commissioners to ensure that all health plans meet state requirements for financial solvency, network adequacy, and claims and appeal procedures.