

## The Benefits of Health Reform

All it takes is a quick glance in the Wall Street Journal to realize that President Obama's Health Reform is controversial, to put it mildly. Talks of continued rate increases, loss of coverage, excise taxes, and penalties paint an awfully bleak picture of the health insurance market going forward. While this might make you want to pack up and move to Canada, I offer a few glimmers of hope on how Health Reform might actually prove to be a benefit to you and your employees.

### Small Business Tax Credits

The maximum credit is 35 percent of premiums paid in 2010 by eligible small business employers and 25 percent of premiums paid by eligible employers that are tax-exempt organizations. In 2014, this maximum credit increases to 50 percent of premiums paid by eligible small business employers and 35 percent of premiums paid by eligible employers that are tax-exempt organizations.

The credit is specifically targeted to help small businesses and tax-exempt organizations that primarily employ low and moderate income workers. It is generally available to employers that have fewer than 25 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees paying wages averaging less than \$50,000 per employee per year.

### Small Employer Grants for Wellness Programs

Under the new legislation, there will be a five-year, \$200 billion program for implementing comprehensive workplace wellness initiatives starting in 2011. Grants will be available to eligible employers who provide their employees with access to a new workplace wellness program. Eligible employers include businesses that employ fewer than 100 employees who work 25 hours or more per week and did not have a workplace wellness program as of March 23, 2010. To be eligible for the grants, wellness programs must be made available to all employees and include:

- criteria related to health awareness including health education, preventive screenings and health risk assessments;
- efforts to maximize employee engagement;
- initiatives to change unhealthy behaviors and lifestyle choices; and
- a supportive environment at the workplace including workplace policies to promote healthy eating, increased physical activity and improved mental health

### Next Steps?

Providing health insurance to your employees is quickly becoming a complicated endeavor, and now more than ever you need a broker you can trust. If you have any questions about the possible benefits available to you, don't hesitate to call.