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## Medicaid

### Virginia Medicaid Expansion Signed by Governor (1)

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) signed a budget bill June 7 that expands Medicaid to an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 low-income residents.

The Virginia General Assembly passed the bills through both houses May 30. The budget bills (H.B. 5001) and companion spending plan (H.B. 5002) were approved on a bipartisan basis.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Virginia is one of 33 states plus the District of Columbia that expanded Medicaid coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

"As a doctor and a public servant, I believe making sure all Virginians have the access to the care they need to be healthy and productive is both a moral and economic imperative," Northam said in a statement June 7.

Bloomberg Law confirmed the bill had been signed prior to the governor's announcement by speaking with Virginia officials.

**Impact of Elections** "This is an incredibly important positive step for the well being of hundreds of thousands of Virginians," Eliot Fishman, senior director of health policy at the advocacy group Families USA, told Bloomberg Law June 7.

"We showed Virginians and the world that chaos and partisan warfare may dominate Washington, but here in Richmond we still work together to do the right thing for our people, not our political party. We can get a lot done if we continue to work together in good faith, with our goal always being to do what's best for Virginia," Northam said.

Virginia's action "shows that elections matter," Fishman said. "Gov. Northam ran on this platform ... and not only did the 2017 elections in Virginia shape the votes of new legislators and elect a pro-expansion gov-

ernor, they really changed the thinking of a number of key incumbent legislators."

Two former Virginia governors in the U.S. Senate praised the new law. "After years of working on this issue that affects families across the Commonwealth, we are thrilled that hundreds of thousands of Virginians who currently lack basic health care coverage will finally have some peace of mind. Today's historic signing shows a good faith effort by legislators to provide health insurance for Virginians who need it the most," Sens. Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Tim Kaine (D-Va.) said in a statement June 7.

While there are 33 states in the pro-expansion column, in one of those expansion states, Maine, the governor hasn't taken steps to expand coverage in spite of a successful ballot measure that supported expansion. Earlier in June, a Maine court said Gov. Paul LePage (R) must file routine paperwork to the federal government by June 11 and take other steps so that 80,000 low-income residents can be enrolled in Medicaid starting July 2.

Advocates of expansion in three other states—Idaho, Nebraska, and Utah—hope to have successful ballot measures this fall.

"Gov. Northam found a way to have a conversation with the most conservative legislators in his state and reach an ordered way of proceeding . . . he was able to shepherd this in a way that's a model for other states," Sara Rosenbaum, a health policy professor at George Washington University, told Bloomberg Law June 7.

The 2012 Supreme Court decision on the Affordable Care Act, in *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*, made Medicaid expansion an option for states instead of a requirement.

The expansion in Virginia is set to take effect Jan. 1, 2019.

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