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By LARRY PHILLIPS and GISEELLE ARREDONDO

- Leader & Times

News about the Affordable Care Act, commonly called ObamaCare, is in newspapers, magazines and on television daily. With wide-spread concerns, especially with local government entities, will ObamaCare affect Liberal and Seward County?

Several major stories recently have pointed to possible troubles for companies, organizations and public schools.



In late August, Delta Airlines confirmed it sent an urgent letter to Obama administration officials warning about the impact of ObamaCare on its bottom line.

Delta executive Robert Kight said his company would have to contribute roughly \$100 million in increased health care costs next year alone, according to a report by Judson Berger at FoxNews.com.

Tom Blumer at www.newsbusters.org reported Wednesday "Longshore Union leaves AFL-CIO over ObamaCare.

"The AFL-CIO has just lost 40,000 of its most militant members," Blumer noted. "The departing members are those in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. In a three-page letter to AFL-CIO head Richard Trumka, ILWU President Donald McEllrath laid out concerns over picket-line crossings and encroachments by other AFL-CIO affiliates, but also cited Trumka's 'overly moderate, compromising policy positions on such important matters as immigration, labor law reform, health care reform, and international labor issues,'" he added.

James Hoffa, President of International Brotherhood of Teamsters even sent a letter to Democratic Senate and House leaders.

"When you and the President sought our support for the Affordable Care Act (ACA), you pledged that if we liked the health plans we have now, we could keep them. Sadly, that promise is under threat. Right now, unless you and the Obama Administration enact an equitable fix, the ACA will shatter not only our hard-earned health benefits, but destroy the foundation of the 40 hour work week that is the backbone of the American middle class," Hoffa writes.

The letter was also signed by Joseph Hansen, International President of UFCW and D. Taylor, President of UNITE-HERE.

According to Newsmax.com's Lisa Barron, "Schools in Indiana are reducing the hours of workers, including teachers' assistants, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers in order to avoid the federal healthcare employer mandate under Obamacare," Barron noted.

"Starting in 2014, the healthcare reform law requires employers with at least 50 full-time workers to offer health insurance to those working at least 30 hours a week or face a financial penalty," she added.

Several articles have pointed out companies with so-called “Cadillac plans” will have to give them up or they will be taxed heavily under ObamaCare.

As organizations, companies and local governments try to understand how ObamaCare will impact them, the City of Liberal is no different.

“We are still learning like everybody else is,” said City of Liberal Finance Director Chris Ford. “We are working with a consultant to figure it out. We don’t know what the full extent and the impact will be when it’s implemented.

“It looks grim,” he added.

How the act will affect the city’s finances and its employees has yet to be determined, according to Ford.

“We see the storm clouds on the horizon, but we don’t know how it’s going to be,” he said. “That’s the frustrating thing. We are still trying to understand it ourselves.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is the first in a series where the Leader & Times will attempt to find out how ObamaCare will affect local governing bodies and schools.

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