



KITCHEN TABLE ECONOMICS

Health Care Law Whacks Pay of Community College Profs

Many of Virginia's community college professors are forced to take big pay cuts because of the Affordable Care Act (a.k.a.: "ObamaCare"), according to WSLN TV-10 in Roanoke.

Private business owners frequently criticize the ACA because they say the law makes it harder for them to pay valuable employees. But the Virginia community college situation shows it isn't just private business taking lumps: Governments and community colleges are also pushed to cut worker pay.

The ACA is a huge law, with many complicated employer mandates and fees. Even most experts have never read the whole thing. One way to make sense of its impact is to show how certain requirements affect real-world worksites.

In the case of Virginia's part-time community college faculty, the important thing is the ACA's new definition of a "full time" worker. Now it's anyone who works more than 30 hours per week for more than a month. Under the ACA, all large employers will be required to offer health coverage to these "full time" workers, or pay a \$2,000 annual fine for each one that is not offered health insurance.

Community colleges often rely on professionals with other full-time careers to teach part-time. The owner of an accounting firm may teach accounting, for example. It's a best of all worlds situation: Students have access to the real-world experienced professionals, the schools avoid paying for full time staff and benefits, and the instructors make extra money teaching what they know and love to a new generation.

Two-thirds of Virginia's community college classes are taught this way. The system has 289,000 students.

Many part-time faculty have been teaching more than a 30 hour week. This cannot continue because the ACA will require the schools to offer health coverage or pay \$2,000 per instructor fines. Either option opens up the schools - and thus students and taxpayers - to huge new costs. So a decision was made to cut all part-time instructors to a weekly workload of less than 30 hours.

"No one is too upset about not being offered health benefits. What's upsetting - and dangerous - is all the hours being cut," said a part-time English instructor in the report.

The change in full-time definition and the health coverage mandate that goes with it also affects students, many of whom work more than 30 hours themselves at restaurants and other jobs that traditionally rely upon part-time workforces.

If you have a Virginia community college student seated around your kitchen table, your home has lost the good value of getting a first class talent in the classroom for part-time prices. Likewise, taxpayers across America are paying the same price because of the new health law's fees and mandates have force state and local governments to change the definition of full-time work.