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## EXTENDING MEDICAID WOULD HELP OKLAHOMA VETERANS

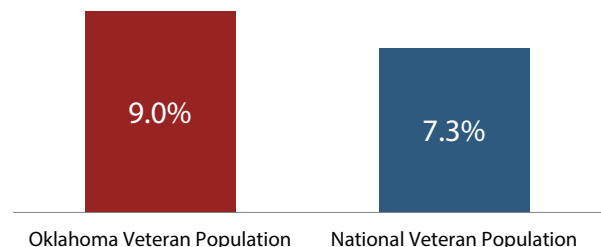
In November 2012, Gov. Mary Fallin said she would not accept federal funds to extend Medicaid coverage to working Oklahomans with incomes of up to 138 percent of the federal poverty line. The decision will have an adverse impact on many Oklahomans, including veterans.

Nationwide, 12.5 million non-elderly veterans are uninsured.<sup>1</sup> Nearly half of uninsured veterans have incomes below 138 percent of the poverty line, which would make them eligible for Medicaid as defined by the Affordable Care Act.<sup>2</sup> By failing to return Oklahoma federal tax dollars to the state for Medicaid expansion, Gov. Fallin and the legislature are ignoring the healthcare needs of many Oklahoma heroes.

### Veterans make up a significant percentage of Oklahoma's population.

According to the Department of Veteran Affairs, Oklahoma is home to 342,816 veterans<sup>3</sup>, or 9 percent of the state's total population. By comparison, veterans made up 7.3 percent of the United States population in 2011.

Percentage of Oklahomans Who Are Veterans Compared to Nationally



### Oklahoma has one of the highest rates of unemployed veterans in the country, and many family members of veterans also go without insurance.<sup>4</sup>

Oklahoma has the fifth-highest rate of uninsured veterans in the country, at 13.8 percent. That is 3.3 percentage points higher than the rest of the United States. An estimated 26,000 veterans are uninsured. Oklahoma has the second-highest rate of uninsured family members of veterans at 11.9 percent, or around 23,000 people. In total, almost 50,000 Oklahoma veterans and their family members are uninsured, a rate of 12.8 percent. Only Montana does a worse job of insuring their veterans and families.

### A substantial portion of uninsured veterans report unmet medical needs.<sup>5</sup>

Nationally, 41.2 percent of uninsured veterans reported unmet medical needs; one-third have at least one chronic health condition; more than one in six (15.3 percent) report being "in fair or poor health." Access to care is an even bigger problem among the uninsured family members of veterans: more than half (54.8 percent) reported unmet medical needs.

[Over...]

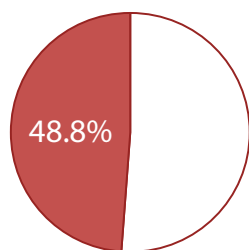
## The VA Helps Many Veterans, But Not All

Most people assume that all veterans can receive health care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which operates the nation's largest health system. In actuality, only about 37 percent of the country's more than 22 million veterans receive health coverage through the VA.<sup>6</sup>

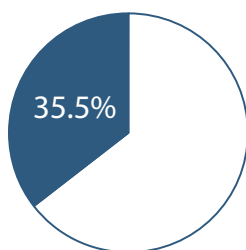
And not all veterans can receive these benefits. For instance, many National Guard and veterans of the reserves are ineligible. Eligibility is determined by active duty status, condition of discharge, length of service, income level and other factors.<sup>7</sup> Veterans' spouses and dependents are only able to access VA health care under particular circumstances.

## Veterans and their families would benefit immensely from extending Medicaid.<sup>8</sup>

Percentage of Uninsured Veterans and Veteran Families Who Would Benefit from Extending Medicaid



Uninsured Veterans



Uninsured Veteran Families

Accepting the federal dollars would extend coverage to 48.8 percent of these uninsured veterans, because they have incomes below 138 percent of the federal poverty line. Currently only one in ten of these uninsured veterans currently qualify for the program nationwide. Even fewer are likely to qualify in Oklahoma because Medicaid eligibility for adults is more strict than in many other states. Among family members of veterans, 35.5 percent make less than 138 percent of the federal poverty line and would therefore become eligible for coverage.

**Bottom line:** By rejecting federal dollars to extend Medicaid, Oklahoma is turning its back on our veterans and their families. Many of these men and women, who have sacrificed so much to protect the safety of their fellow citizens, are being denied the coverage that they urgently need.

For more resources and information, go to: <http://okpolicy.org/medicaid-and-the-affordable-care-act>.

## References

1. Jennifer Haley and Genevieve M. Kenny, *Uninsured Veterans and Family Members: Who Are They and Where do They Live?*, Urban Institute, May 2012 <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412577-Uninsured-Veterans-and-Family-Members.pdf>
2. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Half of Uninsured Veterans Could Gain Coverage Through Medicaid Expansion*, Oct. 2012 <http://www.cbpp.org/files/medicaid-expansion-veterans-fs.pdf>
3. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Veterans Population Map*, September 2012, [http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran\\_Population.asp](http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp)
4. Haley and Kenney, "Uninsured Veterans and Family Members."
5. Ibid.
6. Kenneth W. Kizer, "Veterans and the Affordable Care Act," *Journal of the American Medical Association* (February 22, 2012), pp. 789-790
7. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Military and Veterans' Health Care: Background Brief," <http://www.kaiseredu.org/Issue-Modules/Military-and-Veterans-Health-Care/Background-Brief.aspx>.
8. Haley and Kenney, "Uninsured Veterans and Family Members."