

Benefit Briefs!



We are the company that insurance agents do not want you, or your colleagues, to know about!

2/22/15

February - Heart Month - Workers Comp - ObamaCare Updates

This issue of Benefit Briefs! is packed with a host of employee benefit topics and is designed for a "rapid read" with links to articles that you can research further.

Wellness

- The American Heart Association through its **Go Red for Women** campaign is conducting a study and online survey for and about women regarding heart disease. Go to <https://www.goredforwomen.org/heartstudy> to find more.
- Vaccinations have been in the news lately with the measles infections. The other day, while in the car, I was listening to a radio program regarding a dissenter on the use of vaccinations. You might want to visit <http://drtenpenny.com/home/#> to get a different take on vaccinations.
- Business Insurance carried a great article last year warning that employers should use caution when [crafting wellness plans](#), so they do not violate state and federal laws.
- As a general rule, we are not fans of GMO products or foods. However, Florida thinks that [GMO insects](#) are the answer for bug bites. Fascinating article to read.

About
Bushnell & Company

We are NOT insurance agents or brokers! Since we are a professional fee based consulting firm, our income is transparent and is not tied to high or undisclosed commissions, incentives, trips, etc. from the sale of insurance products.

As the architects of employee benefit plans, we specialize in consulting with leaders and managers of organizations regarding the design, administration, funding and communication of high quality, cost effective and administratively efficient employee benefit plans.

These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- * Medical
- * Dental
- * Disability - Short & Long
- * Life Insurance
- * Long Term Care
- * Retirement
Plans including Defined Benefit Pension, Money Purchase, Profit Sharing, ESOP, 401(k), 403(b), & 457
- * Flexible Benefits or Sec. 125 Cafeteria Plans
- * Transit & Parking
- * Executive Deferred Compensation
- * Retiree Benefits - Medical, Dental, Rx, Medicare coordination of Benefits

Industry Leaders

Jim Clifton, CEO at the Gallup survey organization, wrote an interesting article in Forbes on February 3, entitled [The Big Lie 5.6% Unemployment](#).

Life-Saving Technology

If you have not seen this YouTube video, I would encourage you to take the 2 minutes to look at it. The concept of an **Ambulance Drone** is extremely creative.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=y-rEI4bezWc

Affordable Care Act aka ObamaCare Updates

We stated in our year-end December Benefit Briefs!, despite all the problems that ObamaCare had last year with the roll out of its healthcare.gov website; delays for employers with 50 to 99 employees; complex regulations; etc. our reading of the "tea leaves" is that President Obama will not be issuing any further delays to the implementation of the law as well as the "pay or play" penalties. We are continuing with this position, even though there were 800,000+ reasons that surfaced on February 19th.

- Before the latest news came down 3 days ago, taxpayers were already in for a rude awakening when they prepared their taxes for 2014 and it will get worse in 2015 and 2016. The Dallas Morning News carried a great article that was written by Pamela Yip that explained the [complexity of taxes and ObamaCare](#).
- The New York Times wrote a [comprehensive article](#) regarding the 800,000+ taxpayers who were issued wrong tax forms by Health & Human Services (HHS) which prevents them from filing their tax return now and were urged to hold off from filing their return until the new forms are re-issued in 4-5 week. Essentially, they were given wrong numbers to calculate their subsidy and either repay the excess or will be entitled to an additional subsidy. This discovery also prompted fallout regarding the following issues:

We pride ourselves in providing professional services with a value in excess of our fees . . . often by a very wide margin.

Those services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- \$ Independent 2nd opinion review and advisory services
- \$ Review and analysis of insurance company contracts and proposals.
- \$ Prepare RFI / RFP / RFP specifications and do analysis for vendor selection.
- \$ Manage annual insurance / vendor renewal process.
- \$ Financing vehicle analysis, including appropriateness of managed care, HMO, HRA, FSA, HSA in insured plan, self-funding and self - insurance.
- \$ Actuarial and administrative consulting services for retirement as well as health and welfare benefit plans.
- \$ Online enrollment and administration.
- \$ Communication of employee benefit plans.
- \$ Comprehensive / total reward benefit statements.
- \$ Focus group studies
- \$ ERISA / COBRA / HIPAA compliance audits
- \$ Expert witness consultation

- Those taxpayers who have already filed their return for 2014 (estimates at 50,000 taxpayers) will now have to file amended returns.
- The Administration has extended the deadline from February 15 to April 30 so that people can enroll this year and not have to pay the penalty in 2016. It seems hard to believe, but according to certain news sources, supposedly 40 to 50% of taxpayers eligible for subsidies are not aware that they are eligible. Since the individual "pay or play" penalty goes up for 2015 and 2016, they are trying to minimize the negative impact. Of course, there are already 30 types of exemptions that individuals can qualify for not having insurance and not having to pay the penalty.
- Of course, when people applied for the subsidies during the enrollment in early 2014 and 2015, they are using "income estimates" and then it is true that they file their actual tax return. Obviously, some people could have low balled the estimated income number and thereby increase the projected subsidy and now the chickens are coming home to roost. Others may have overestimated projected income, and are now eligible for a larger subsidy than they originally calculated and now would get that back on their tax return.
- It is not only the federal exchange (healthcare.gov), but we also recently learned that some state exchanges also sent out incorrect forms. For example, California sent out over 100,000 wrong numbers as well.
- On a related note, Kaiser Health News carried an interesting Q&A regarding the repayment of premium tax credits if the Marketplace (healthcare.gov) miscalculated them. If you know someone who is eligible for subsidies, [pass this article](#) on to them.
- The individual "Pay or Play" penalties for 2014,

2015 in 2016 are [here](#).

- On top of all that, the back end of the healthcare.gov website still has not been finished. There was an excellent article [Behind the Curtain](#) written on February 18 that we encourage you to read.

Other Employee Benefit Plans News

- Read about the [top 5 trends for 2015](#) in employee benefit plans.

Workers Compensation

- On February 5, the NFL and retired players were sent back to the bargaining table on [concussion suit](#).
- On January 25, a Texas appellate court has affirmed a \$5.3 million liability judgment against a Texas workers compensation non-subscriber that was deemed negligent in the case of an [injured employee](#).

Texas & Miscellaneous News

- [Bee Cave Bob](#), the armadillo who saw his shadow, is predicting an early spring :).
- Texas Auditor Report states that \$205,000,000 medical plan under [Employees Retirement System](#) was done in a sloppy, manner, poorly monitored, and possibly unfair.
- Forbes published an interesting article on the [sad predicament](#) of the Jackie Robinson West Little League Champions from Chicago on February 14.
- Greg Abbott was sworn in as the Governor of Texas on January 20th. He is confined to a wheelchair. The Austin American-Statesman carried an interesting article on the [politics of disability](#).
- John Kelso wrote a humorous article in the Austin American-Statesman newspaper earlier this month, entitled Texans Know You Do Not Stand in Line for [Barbecue](#) in Austin.

Our clients have discovered the right answers pay for themselves!©

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