**Thanks so much to all who responded that you received the test email. So glad we can finally reach you all again, because we have a legislative update and a really fun hula hoop workshop to tell you about, among other things…**

**Parents Organizing for Welfare and Economic Rights**

**hosts POWER Outage, a community gathering every first Monday.**

**Sometimes it’s a workshop, a discussion, planning, or something just for fun.**

**Join us on Monday, April 7th for**

**Hula Hoop Workshop with Jay Escobar!**

**You must register for this workshop at info@mamapower.org**

**or 360-352-9716. Let us know how many are in your party and everyone’s favorite colors.**

**Children are welcome!**

**We will have hula hoop making supplies for all who register.**

**POWER Outage begins with a potluck meal at 5:30 pm.**

**Bring something to share if you are able.**

**Workshop from 6 – 8 pm.**

**At Darby’s Café in downtown Olympia, 211 5th Avenue,**

**The café is closed, but the owners kindly let us use the space.**

[**www.mamapower.org**](http://www.mamapower.org/) **Find us on Facebook.**

**POWER is an organization of low-income parents and allies advocating for a strong social safety net while working towarda world where children and care giving are truly valued, and the devastation of poverty has been eradicated.**

**Below:**

1. **Legislative session news!**
2. **Haven’t signed up for health care yet? Do it at POWER.**
3. **What happens if you haven’t signed up for Affordable Heath Care?**
4. **WA Legislature passes the Dream Act!**
5. **More money thrown at fraud – to investigate the investigators. Ridiculous.**

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**1. The legislative session ended with some good results and some not so good.**

**Let’s start with the good news:**

* **A 15% incentive payment, beginning April 2015, for WorkFirst households that participate in their IRP activities for at least 20 hours a week.**

* **50% of unearned income will be disregarded in for non-parental caregivers starting on November 1st.**

* **Increased work study funding for WorkFirst students.**

* **AREN (Additional Requirements for Emergent Needs) benefits of $750 will be available again once per year rather than once per lifetime, hopefully starting in May or June.**

**Yay! Also there is a spate of new home visiting and it’s hard to tell whether it’s a good thing or a bad thing. Some DSHS policy wonks make it sound like a threat and others like an honest attempt to reach out to folks who have multiple barriers to making it into the welfare office. We’d love to hear about your experiences.**

**Here they are:**

* **A home visiting program for TANF families using the infant exemption**

* **A home visiting program for TANF recipients served through the Rapid Re-Housing Program**

* **Reducing the sanction period to 2 months and implementing a home visit for persons who do not respond to their sanction notice**

**And here’s another bad one:**

* **Mandating attendance at WorkFirst orientation as a condition of eligibility *This is not the comprehensive eval at WorkSource, but a new hoop you will have to jump through at the welfare office before you can get TANF. We definitely want to hear if this rule causes you any problems.***

**2. Contact us by replying to this email, or calling 360-352-9716.**

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**3. Sign up for health care at POWER!**

**Carolina Felix (an Affordable Health Care Act in person assister) will assist you to sign up for health care at POWER on April 17th (Thursday) She can take appointments from 9-11 and 1-2. Either reply to this email or call us at 360-352-9716 to an appointment.**

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# **4. Obamacare deadline 101: What if I haven't signed up yet?**

**The Obamacare deadline to sign up for health insurance is March 31, but people who start the sign-up process by then have extra time to finish. To enroll,** [**HealthCare.gov**](http://healthcare.gov/) **is the first stop.**

**By** [**Linda Feldmann**](http://www.csmonitor.com/About/Staff/Linda-Feldmann)**, Staff writer / March 31, 2014**

**Millions of Americans still haven’t signed up for health insurance, despite the individual mandate now in effect under** [**Obamacare**](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/Patient+Protection+and+Affordable+Care+Act)**. The deadline is March 31, but those who start the sign-up process by that date have extra time. Exactly how much is unclear.** [**Obama administration**](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/Barack+Obama) **officials liken the process to an election: If you get in line before the polls close, you’ll be allowed to vote.**

**So, if you are among the uninsured, what do you do?**

**The easy answer is to go to** [**HealthCare.gov**](http://healthcare.gov/)**, shop, and enroll. If your state has its own exchange, the federally run** [**HealthCare.gov**](http://healthcare.gov/) **will steer you to it. If you have questions or don’t have a computer, you can call a toll-free number – 1-800-318-2596 – and an operator will help you.**

**The operator can also help you find a “navigator” – someone you can meet with in person to help you enroll. Navigators are individuals and organizations trained and paid by the government to help consumers understand their health coverage options and complete the forms.**

**Enrolling via paper application is also an option. Those claiming an exception for more time to enroll have until April 7 for the government agency running enrollment – the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services -- to receive the paper application. Applicants who qualify for an extension will have until April 30 to pick a plan.**

**Spanish speakers can get information and enroll at the Spanish version of** [**HealthCare.gov**](http://healthcare.gov/)**,**[**CuidadoDeSalud.gov**](http://cuidadodesalud.gov/)**. They can also reach Spanish-speaking operators at the toll-free number.**

**One doesn’t have to buy health insurance through a government exchange to have qualified coverage. People who are too young for** [**Medicare**](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/Medicare) **and don’t get health coverage through their employers can also go to a private insurance agency, such as eHealth, at** [**ehealthinsurance.com**](http://ehealthinsurance.com/)**.**

**If you think you can’t afford health insurance, you may be wrong. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides federal subsidies on a sliding scale, based on income.** [**HealthCare.gov**](http://healthcare.gov/) **has a chart showing the income levels, based on family size.**

**To access subsidies, one must enroll via a government exchange, either** [**HealthCare.gov**](http://healthcare.gov/) **or one’s state exchange. Americans and legal residents with income below a certain level are eligible for** [**Medicaid**](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/Medicaid)**, a federal-state program that provides free or low-cost health care. States have the option of expanding access to Medicaid, and so eligibility requirements vary from state to state.**

**People under 30 and those with hardship exemptions may buy a lower-cost “catastrophic” health plan. Such a plan protects you from very high medical costs. (Hardship exemptions are listed on the website. Examples include eviction, the death of a close family member, and bankruptcy.)**

**“Catastrophic plans usually have lower monthly premiums than a comprehensive plan, but cover you only if you need a lot of care,” says the page on catastrophic coverage at** [**HealthCare.gov**](http://healthcare.gov/)**. “They basically protect you from worst-case scenarios like serious accidents or illnesses.”**

**For a variety of reasons, some people don’t want to buy health insurance. But if they don’t have coverage, they could face a penalty, administered by the Internal Revenue Service. The first year, the penalty is $95 per person or 1 percent of family income, whichever is higher. The penalty goes up every year, and by 2016, is $695 per person or 2.5 percent of income. Every year thereafter, the penalties are adjusted for inflation.**

**The penalty will be waived if one’s income falls below a certain threshold. For example, someone who would have been eligible for Medicaid if their state had opted to expand access to the program would not face a penalty.**

[**HealthCare.gov**](http://healthcare.gov/) **lists eight exemptions from the penalty:**

* **You’re uninsured for less than three months of the year.**
* **The lowest-priced coverage available to you would cost more than 8 percent of your household income.**
* **You don’t have to file a tax return because your income is too low.**
* **You’re a member of a federally recognized tribe or eligible for services through an Indian Health Services provider.**
* **You’re a member of a recognized health-care sharing ministry.**
* **You’re a member of a recognized religious sect with religious objections to insurance, including Social Security and Medicare.**
* **You’re incarcerated, and not awaiting the disposition of charges against you.**
* **You’re not lawfully present in the US.**

**The exemptions page on** [**HealthCare.gov**](http://healthcare.gov/) **includes links to forms for applying for an exemption.**

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**5. Inslee signs DREAM Act: The Legislature’s lone big accomplishment**

**Posted on February 26, 2014 | By** [**Joel Connelly**](http://blog.seattlepi.com/seattlepolitics/author/joel_connelly/)

**A jubilant, ebullient Gov. Jay Inslee, surrounded by students, on Wednesday signed the Washington DREAM Act, the Legislature’s one — and possibly only — major accomplishment of this year’s session. The act allows young, undocumented immigrants — most brought to Washington as young children — to apply for state need grants to pay for college.**

**Inslee: “How could we possibly say no to these young people?”**

**“The people who are here today are the ones who ultimately made this happen,” said Inslee. “Looking into their eyes, so full of ambition and eagerness and energy, I thought, ‘How could we possibly say no to these young people?’” said Inslee.**

**The Legislature did say no until recently, despite a concerted campaign by students, documented and undocumented, for the DREAM Act.**

**The Democratic-controlled state House of Representatives passed the legislation last year, and again on the first day of this year’s session. Over nearly a year, however, state Sen. Barbara Bailey, R-Oak Harbor, chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, did not allow it to come to a vote.**

**Bailey said last month the DREAM Act was not a priority. A few weeks later, however, she turned 180 degrees, becoming lead floor sponsor.**

**Pressure for the DREAM Act came from senators from east of Lake Washington. Republican Sens. Joe Fain and Andy Hill are up for re-election this year, as is renegade Democrat Sen. Rodney Tom. Tom is titular Senate majority leader in a Republican-dominated coalition that runs the Legislature’s upper house.**

**Bailey was transformed into the chief Senate sponsor of a renamed DREAM Act, and the Senate kicked in an additional $5 million for need grants.**

**Still, the bill did not go down easy for some Republicans. It passed on a 35-10 vote, with Democrats joined by 10 Republican senators. The 10 “no” votes, and four abstainers, were all Republicans.**

**Inslee was flanked by Bailey and former state Rep. Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney as he signed the legislation.**

**U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., praised the Washington Legislature for passing the bill, and renewed her call for a national DREAM Act that would create a path to citizenship for young undocumented residents who serve in the military or go to college. She would also send $750 million to states, such as Washington, that offer in-state tuition or financial aid to undocumented students.**

**“All qualified students should have the same opportunity to get a college degree, including DREAMers,” said Murray. “And I am so proud that Washington State continues to lead on this critical issue.**

**“Undocumented students are no different than their classmates. They grow up in the same towns, attend the same schools and share the same dreams — and they deserve an equal chance to go to college and start successful careers in this country.”**

**The Mexican Consulate-General in Seattle also applauded passage and signing of the act.**

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# **Lawmakers approve audit of DSHS fraud unit**

<http://www.king5.com/news/investigators/Lawmakers-approve-audit-of-DSHS-fraud-unit-250252911.html>

**by CHRIS INGALLS / KING 5 News**

**Posted on March 13, 2014**

**Washington lawmakers earmarked $300,000 in the budget they approved Thursday to pay for an audit of the fraud fighting unit at the Department of Social and Health Services.**

**The legislation calls on DSHS to “identify and reduce the backlog” of cases in its Office of Fraud and Accountability (OFA).**

**The State Auditor’s Office will launch a probe of OFA to determine if it is properly handling fraud complaints related to food stamp and welfare cash programs, as well as taxpayer subsidized childcare programs for low-income parents.**

**The legislation follows a KING 5 investigation earlier this year that revealed that OFA has a backlog of nearly 2,000 criminal cases that are waiting to be assigned to investigators.**

**The backlog exists even though records show that OFA purged nearly 5,000 tips about fraud from DSHS employees during a 14-day period in 2012.**

**The audit legislation was sponsored by Senator Andy Hill (R-Redmond), who said the investigation showed that DSHS may still have a “leaky ship” that is not protecting taxpayer dollars.**

**In 2011 the KING 5 series** [**“Their Crime, Your Dime”**](http://www.king5.com/news/investigators/Their-Crime---Your-Dime-a-series-of-reports-105189679.html) **exposed rampant fraud in DSHS and federal programs that are supposed to help needy families.**