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West Virginia Couple Supports Health Reform

By: State: West Virginia | Source: [AARP.org](#)

Jackie Henry and her husband have learned first-hand why the health care reform bill proposed by the U.S. House of Representatives is so important.

The Henrys, who are from Charlestown, have fallen into the donut hole for the past two years, which has forced them to choose between the necessities of life and the medications they need to survive—not a very good choice to have to make. They've been late on bills and even put their health in jeopardy just trying to survive.

“Something has to be done,” said Jackie. “The House plan closes the donut hole, and that needs to be done. Otherwise, it’s just devastating for people.”

Jackie retired four years ago. “That day, I lost insurance,” she said. Things got really bad a couple of years

ago when Jackie's husband, Benjamin, was diagnosed with a tumor in his heart. At the age of 73, Benjamin has had to go back to work in order to try to make ends meet. Jackie, who is 69, also went back to work in spite of a chronic lung condition.

"Sometimes, I have to pay—out of pocket—\$400 to \$500 a month," said Jackie. "We have to be late on gas bills and other utilities, but what else do you do?"

Jackie tried cutting back on medications, and she and her husband even shared a month's supply of one prescription that they both take, effectively cutting the dosage in half for both of them in order to save money.

Those decisions turned out badly when Jackie ended up hospitalized because she'd gotten sicker. "I won't do that again," she said. "It ends up costing more when you end up in the hospital."

The Henrys are aware that health care reform is controversial, but Jackie says she's glad someone is thinking about seniors and their needs, and she is thankful AARP is supporting the plan that closes the donut hole and protects seniors.

And they are hopeful something will be done soon. While they continue to work, and they try to get as many free samples of medicine from their doctors as possible, the Henrys live in fear of losing their home.

"So many people have to do without. A lot of people have to just give up and go live with their children, and you know, just because we are old doesn't mean we aren't human. We are still people. We need medicine and we need to be able to live our own lives," Jackie said.