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NBC's Anne Thompson compares how the Affordable Care Act is affecting people in Illinois and Texas, two states that took different approaches to the law.

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Citation

MLA  
Transcript

Obamacare in 2014- a Tale of Two States

CHUCK TODD, anchor:
A little earlier, I discussed the politics of health care with Secretary Burwell and Governor Jindal. But what difference has the Affordable Care Act made to the millions of Americans who have signed up for coverage? I asked my colleague, Anne Thompson, to take a look at two states- Texas and Illinois. They took very different approaches to the law.

MAN: $770.

ANNE THOMPSON, reporting:
Everything is bigger in Texas-- including the opposition to the Affordable Care Act.

ROBERT MAYFIELD: It’s is going to be more taxes on all Texas people. I mean, that's a-- that’s a-- a trap if ever there was one, seems to me.

THOMPSON: One thousand miles away in the land of Lincoln and the current president, it’s also called the ACA, and embraced.

KEITH MOON: The ACA saved us.

THOMPSON: One year later, two states with very different assessments. Robert Mayfield heads a sizzling business in Austin, Texas. He owns a burger joint and six Dairy Queens, employing just under 100 people at above minimum wage.

MAYFIELD: We pay $10 an hour to start with. We don't have to. We don't do it because we are nice guys. We do that because we get the best people.

THOMPSON: Mayfield wants to expand the business started by his father in 1949 but going over that 100 employee mark means he would have to offer health care to most of his full-time workers or pay penalties under the law's employer mandate.

MAYFIELD: These calls that the government imposed is on business. They don't come out of the air. You know, we-- we-- if have to pay them, we got to pass them on or we don't stay in business.

THOMPSON: And if 30 hours a week is how the law defines a full-time worker, forget expansion,
Mayfield says he may have to cut hours or jobs.

MAYFIELD: We got some people that I care very much about that worked for us 10, 12 years, you know, what do I do with them?

THOMPSON: Texas has the highest percentage of uninsured in the nation, some 6 million people. Only 773,000 signed up for the ACA.

JOHN ZERWAS: It would just characterize that this is going to be the panacea to our uninsured issues out there. Well, it's not and it never was.

THOMPSON: State representative John Zerwas says he hears complaints from people who paid more for less coverage. And though Texas rejected the Medicaid expansion, this Republican doctor is open to other ways.

ZERWAS: There is the possibility to look at ways of how we provide insurance or some kind of program available to this million or million and a half people for which there's not an option for right now.

THOMPSON: In Washington, the incoming Republican majority vows to repeal the law, fighting words in Keith Moon's house outside Chicago.

KEITH MOON: The people that want the repeal this law and the people that won't extend Medicaid, they sit there with insurance. You go without insurance for two years and tell me how you feel.

THOMPSON: Moon's family did after he and his wife, Joyce, lost their jobs. Joyce's pre-existing thyroid condition pushed the price tag for insurance to an unaffordable $1,750 a month. As a husband, your wife isn't getting the attention she needs.

MOON: It was terrible. You felt awful about that.

THOMPSON: Now with the ACA, they pay $300 a month and Joyce gets the care she needs. One year later, what's the emotional difference?

MOON: You don't have that overhanging stress and risk of medical bankruptcy. To have that burden lifted from your shoulders is just-- I don't even know how to put it in words.

THOMPSON: In Illinois, of the 1.2 million people eligible, more than 700,000 signed up.

MAN: Because of the coverage in-- in the-- in the Affordable Care Act, a lot of people are more likely to live. Families are less likely to go bankrupt.

THOMPSON: Entering year two, the Affordable Care Act has not healed the divide it created. For Meet the Press, Anne Thompson.