

On the Hill

Health Care Law Ruled Unconstitutional in Florida Federal Court

Implementation will still proceed unchecked.

On Monday, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) received its most significant blow yet when Judge Roger Vinson of the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Florida ruled the law unconstitutional. Judge Vinson, however, declined to issue an injunction against the law, meaning the ruling is likely to result in the law's continued implementation. The case will now be appealed by the Obama administration to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta.

This was one of the more high profile lawsuits involving the new health care reform law in the country since it was brought by 26 states and members of Congress of both parties weighed in for and against the lawsuit. It is also noteworthy that Judge Vinson ruled against the individual mandate specifically, but since there was no "severability clause" in the law (allowing for particular pieces to be struck down while the rest of the law could be upheld), he struck down the PPACA in its entirety.

Judge Vinson's decision brings the tally to two rulings in favor of the constitutionality of the PPACA (in West Virginia and Michigan) and two rulings against its constitutionality (in Virginia and Florida). So far, all four rulings have fallen along party lines as the judges in West Virginia and Michigan were Democrat nominees and the judges in Virginia and Florida were Republican nominees. There are many more pending cases throughout the country and a significant number of these cases have already been thrown out without a ruling. The decision by Judge Vinson will undoubtedly not be the last since there are many more lawsuits through the country along with those working their way through the appeals process. The debate over the constitutionality of the individual mandate included in the PPACA is expected to eventually be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

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