

Statement from Christopher Penczak

I've recently been reminded that while many assume the Witchcraft and Pagan community is fairly liberal, not all of us identify with the left, so I don't think we can necessarily have a unified stance on health care in general or the Affordable Care Act specifically. Pagans often disagree on ritual and theology, the points that are the most similar, so politics and social thought are really open fields for us. Many of us are professionally involved in health care, or various aspect of alternative and complimentary healthcare, so we are passionate about the topic and where we are headed with this issue as a nation.

Personally, I was pleasantly surprised the Supreme Court upheld the Affordable Care Act. As someone who is self-employed as a writer, minister, and teacher, I've been paying for my own health insurance for years, and when I couldn't afford it, paying for my healthcare expenses out of pocket. I know many "successful" Pagan elders, teachers, ministers, and authors, as well as many community members with more traditional jobs, who do the same because affordable healthcare has not been within their reach. One of the main reasons I'm so involved in herbal medicine and complimentary care is to diminish my family's dependence on doctors and pharmaceuticals. If we can handle something at home with a trusted remedy, we try that first before rushing off to the doctor. We try to handle illness before it becomes something major. Doesn't always work, but it has dramatically changed our own way of thinking about medicine.

Recently we looked into the possibility of purchasing a group health insurance plan for various members of the Temple of Witchcraft who expressed need. Many of our volunteers and ministers do not currently have health insurance or are paying large fees for independent insurance rather than being part of a group. The current avenues didn't work out due to cost and eligibility, so I'm looking forward to the ACA taking full effect and seeing what options and prices open up to us and the community. Some exciting conversations began at Pantheacon 2012 about healthcare and the Pagan community, and I hope the ACA can help us cover those in the Pagan community and beyond.

Teaching to international students and having conversations with them about the topic is always enlightening. The rest of the modern world cannot understand America's hesitancy to move towards a more universal healthcare system. The more I talk to them, the more I agree. I've had European friends in the US leave and move back to Europe because of the healthcare situation in our country. I am finding it hilarious that all those opposed to the ACA who are threatening to leave the country are planning to go to other countries that have universal healthcare and they just don't realize it. I think that marks a distinct lack of information on how successful healthcare works in other parts of the world.