

The Battle Over Healthcare

2020 is both a senatorial and presidential election year. While every American citizen knows the names of Joe Biden and Donald Trump, they may not know Mike Espy and Cindy Hyde-Smith. October is set to be a battle ground in Mississippi, as these two candidates will face off for a seat in Washington, D.C. Espy will be representing the Democratic party and Hyde-Smith, the Republican. The most important thing about a candidate is their policies. So, what do these two candidates advocate for?

A major issue in this year's senate election is expanding medicaid and providing affordable healthcare to all citizens of Mississippi.

"This is the No. 1 issue for the Espy campaign," Espy said. "It is the No. 1 issue in Mississippi".

Espy has taken into account that Mississippi was 50th among states in accessible and affordable healthcare in 2016. Espy plans to expand the Affordable Healthcare Act in Mississippi by giving medical insurance to over 200,000 workers who previously were not protected by employer-sponsored insurance. Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann supports Espy in his plan for expanding Medicaid.

"Mississippi has made a lot of progress in the past 60 years, yet our healthcare system is still in crisis," Espy said. "Healthcare is not equal. We have failed our rural hospitals and our rural communities because we can't guarantee affordable and accessible healthcare."

The expansion of Medicaid would be extremely beneficial because it would give many Mississippians access to hospitals. Rural hospitals around the state have shut down or become understaffed and underfunded over the years. By bringing these hospitals back and strengthening those which already exist, many Mississippians would have access to care.

Hyde-Smith has also stated the importance of healthcare in her campaign when questioned on the subject.

"As your United States senator, I've made it a priority to improve access to quality health care for all Mississippians." Hyde-Smith said.

For many years Mississippi has statistically ranked low among all states in a majority of categories, one such category is healthcare. Since Hyde-Smith's inauguration into the United States Senate, Mississippi remains ranked 50th in the United States for affordable healthcare.

While Espy supports expanding the ACA, Justin Brassel spoke on Hyde-Smith's approach to providing affordable healthcare.

"Sen. Hyde-Smith believes that common-sense, patient-centered reforms would better help Mississippi families afford health insurance without expanding the government's role in providing healthcare," Brassel said.

Hyde-Smith wishes to abolish the Affordable Care Act and place private insurances in the position to provide all healthcare rather than placing care into the hands of the government. Hyde-Smith also takes a different view on whether Medicaid should be expanded in Mississippi.

"It is for state officials, not Mississippi's federal officials to decide," Hyde-Smith said.

It is unclear if Mississippi has improved at all with healthcare in recent years. In light of the coronavirus pandemic, Mississippi has done statistically worse than many states. Mississippi's early opening resulted in over 100,000 Mississippians becoming infected with COVID-19 and 3000 of those individuals dying. Despite promises to keep Mississippians safe, many question whether Hyde-Smith has truly done so.

Covid-19 has truly shaped the way American citizens focus on the issues around them. The pandemic has increased the already high concern for affordable healthcare for all in Mississippi. Whether one votes for Mike Espy or Cindy Hyde-Smith in November, a major issue to be considered will be medicaid and the health care each Mississippian will receive.