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## **Protection from insurance regulations enacted in 2 more states**

Samaritan Ministries members are thanking God that two more states have been added to the ranks of those with protections for health care sharing ministries.

In the state of Washington, Governor Chris Gregoire signed a health care bill into law on Wednesday, May 11, that included a provision recognizing that health care sharing ministries are not health insurance. The provision protects these ministries from regulation as insurance.

In Georgia, Governor Nathan Deal signed the Health Care Sharing Ministries Freedom to Share Act on May 11 as well, also making it possible for HCSMs like Samaritan to operate in that state free from any attempt in the future to characterize its sharing as insurance and subjecting the ministry to government regulation.

The Washington situation in particular showed the hand of God at work. The sequence of events began with an order for the Peoria, Illinois-based Samaritan to stop operating in Washington state.

The Washington insurance commissioner's office issued a cease and desist order on April 1, meaning that Washington state members would be halted from sharing other members' medical needs or having their needs shared. Samaritan members and leadership immediately began praying and looking for a course of action. Members in Washington, including newly-appointed state Senator Jeff Baxter and longtime political strategist and lobbyist Douglas Simpson, responded quickly with offers of help.

The following week, Washington state Representative Bill Hinkle introduced in the House an amendment to a health care bill backed by the office of the insurance commissioner. The bill was approved and returned to the Senate, where it was passed by the end of that week and sent to the governor with the amendment intact.

During the legislative process, Washington Samaritan members have been allowed to continue sharing without interruption. The insurance commissioner's office said it would rescind the cease and desist order when the bill was signed.

"We thank God that He has taken this threat to the religious freedom of our members in

Washington state and has turned it into a further protection,” said Ray King, vice president of communications at Samaritan.

Other states that have similar safe-harbor laws for health care sharing ministries are Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Samaritan Ministries is a health care sharing ministry and recognized 501(c)3 tax-exempt charity founded in 1994. It has members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, several U.S. territories, and around the world. For more information about SMI, visit [www.samaritanministries.org](http://www.samaritanministries.org). For more information about health care sharing, visit [www.healthcaresharing.org](http://www.healthcaresharing.org).

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