

# Affordable Care Act forum held in Rochester

Patti Singer, Staff writer 10:25 p.m. EDT October 17, 2013

Obamacare is either the greatest thing since sliced bread or a moldy loaf stinking up your countertop.

"People are taking very hard, partisan positions," Sarah F. Liebschutz, professor emerita of The College at Brockport, said Thursday at a forum on the Affordable Care Act hosted by the League of Women Voters — Rochester Metropolitan Area at Asbury First United Methodist Church.

She said those positions often are being staked out without fully understanding the facts or having the data to prove the point. Although the law was enacted in 2010 and some aspects have taken effect, the big rollout is now, with the start of the insurance exchanges.

"We're starting to see the nuances of implementation," said Liebschutz, who wrote about organizing and financing health care in her 2011 book *Communities and Health Care: The Rochester, New York Experiment*.

Liebschutz, who moderated the discussion, said most Americans would agree with the aim of the law — to increase access to care, improve quality and contain costs. "The question is, how does all this play out?"

With no let-up in the debate over the law, Georgia DeGregorio, president of the League of Women Voters, asked the panelists what they believed were the challenges to getting the law rolled out.

Lynne Scalzo, vice president of business strategy for Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, cited educating people about what the law means for them. "I worry people will be overwhelmed and not do anything."

Kim Wynn, whose job as program manager for Coordinated Care Services Inc. is to help enroll people in coverage, echoed those concerns. "We need to meet the high level of need in the community."

As part of health reform, doctors will be paid on how well they care for patients, not how many services they provide. Michelle Casey of the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency said there needs to be more study on the incentives that get the payment model "off the fee-for-service treadmill."

Doctors also will function more as a team, said Dr. Joseph Vasile, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Rochester Independent Practice Association. As a result, there is a need for better communication among providers so they can coordinate a patient's care.

Phyllis Connelly was among about 50 people who came to learn more about a law that makes *War and Peace* look like bedtime reading.

"I'm anxious to see how they'll get it running smoothly as quickly as possible," she said.

PSINGER@DemocratandChronicle.com