

A break for smokers? Glitch may limit penalties

July 9 2013, by Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar

(AP)—They have to huddle outside office buildings and they can't get their nicotine fix by lighting up on airplanes. But now smokers may catch a break from a glitch in President Barack Obama's health care law.

The administration has quietly notified insurers that a computer system problem will limit penalties as high as 50 percent that the law says the companies may charge smokers.

A fix will take at least a year to put in place.

Experts say older smokers are more likely to benefit from the [glitch](#). But depending on how insurers respond, it's also possible that younger smokers could wind up facing higher penalties than they otherwise would have.

Some see a pattern of delays emerging as the health care overhaul moves closer to its Oct. 1 launch.

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