

More Proof Obamacare Is Increasing Coverage, but Not Access to Health Care

ALYENE SENGER

Many of Obamacare's beneficiaries have already discovered or will eventually discover that there's a big difference between insurance coverage and access to health care services.

Today, the New York Times highlighted a report by the Department of Health and Human Services that shows access to care in the Medicaid program is very limited.

The study, conducted between July 2013 and October 2013, concludes that more than half of providers could not offer appointments to Medicaid managed care enrollees with 35 percent of providers listed under an erroneous location. Nor

were those the only issues, according to the report:

Among the providers who offered appointments, the median wait time was 2 weeks. However, over a quarter had wait times of more than 1 month, and 10 percent had wait times longer than 2 months. Finally, primary care providers were less likely to offer an appointment than specialists; however, specialists tended to have longer wait times.

This is neither surprising nor a new conclusion. The Medicaid program has along and well-documented history of limited access to care and poorer health outcomes for beneficiaries compared to those with private insurance.

But despite these facts, starting in 2014, Obamacare includes a major expansion of the program. In any state that adopts the expansion, the law expands Medicaid eligibility to anyone earning up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that this will add 11 million enrollees into the program by 2015, for an estimated total of 46 million enrollees in 2015.

Of course, adding millions more beneficiaries into the already broken program will only exacerbate the existing access to care issues for Medicaid beneficiaries.

Moreover, the Obamacare-induced access problems are coupled with the shortage of doctors and other healthcare work-

force professionals the nation was already expected to face over the next decade. As Amy Anderson, a former graduate fellow at The Heritage Foundation, writes, "The projected supply of workers fails to meet the demand associated with population growth and aging of the population. With the new demand for medical services for the millions who are expected to enroll in Medicaid and the federal and state insurance exchanges, the workforce shortages could become catastrophic."

This is yet another example of how Obamacare takes America's health care system in exactly the wrong direction—worsening existing issues instead of properly addressing them.

Republicans Lose Round 1 to Obama on Immigration

GENEVIEVE WOOD

Well, that didn't take long.

In the first standoff between Republican leadership and President Obama following the November elections, the GOP is showing signs it doesn't have the fortitude to fight the good fight.

We went from House Speaker John Boehner declaring just days after the election that when it came to Obama's executive action on immigration, "We are going to fight the president tooth and nail," to three weeks later the House passing a completely toothless bill that declares the president's actions "null and void" but has zero strings attached to actually make that so.

Boehner updated his talking points this week saying on Thursday, "Come January, we'll have a Republican House and Republican Senate, and we'll be in a stronger position to take actions." It is, he said, "the most practical way to fight the president's action."

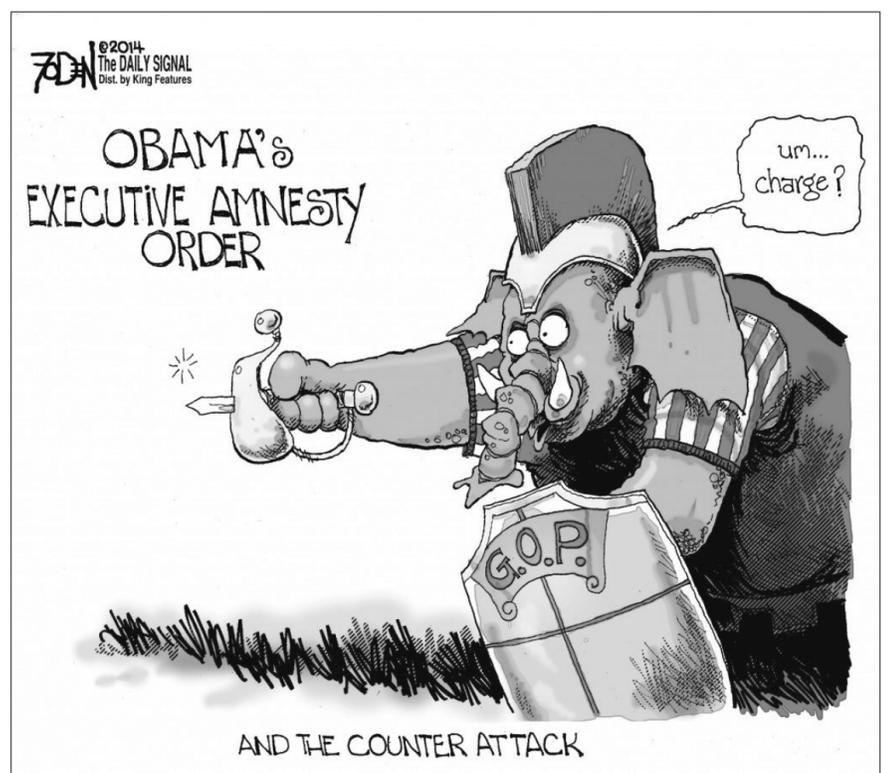
Practical isn't the same as effective.

"Practical" means business as usual and "we're backing down." Indeed, there is the possibility the House will pass a bill next week that funds all government agencies well into 2015, including the Department of Homeland Security—the main implementer of Obama's executive amnesty program. Despite the fact the GOP will control both the House and Senate come January, it is much harder to take back money once you've allocated it.

There is no good reason for the House NOT to take real action now. If they need ideas, they can take a look at the public memo put together by my colleagues at Heritage Action that clearly lays out three very workable scenarios the GOP could follow to force Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's hand—and putting any talk about not funding the government or a government shutdown on both Reid's and Obama's plate.

Heritage Action chief executive Michael Needham is right to say, "The fight is now, not next year. Americans expect real action, not a show vote."

And not only did voters deliver a re-



sounding message on Election Day rebuffing Obama and his agenda, a new poll out this week by Quinnipiac University shows a growing opposition among American voters to illegal immigration.

In November 2013, 57 percent of American voters said illegal immigrants should be allowed to stay in the country and be given a path to citizenship. That number has dropped almost 10 points in the past year with only 48 percent agreeing with

that statement today.

The same 2013 poll showed 26 percent of respondents believed illegal immigrants should be forced to leave the country. Today, that number is up to 35 percent—the largest ever recorded by Quinnipiac.

There has been a lot of talk from Republicans about how Obama apparently didn't get the message from the election. Conservatives might rightly ask the same of the GOP leadership.

Help Stop Animal Abuse

DR. PETER SPIEGEL
AND MARILYN RAMOS

This is an uncomfortable topic but if you suspect animal cruelty, you should do something. It may feel nosy to do something, but it may be the only shot an innocent animal has. Reporting cruelty can be done easily and anonymously.

Hitting defenseless animals, keeping them chained without exercise or leaving them exposed in severe weather all count as abuse. Mistreating animals can (and often does) escalate into domestic assault. Studies have shown a link between violence toward animals and violence toward spouses, children and elders. If you witness an animal in imminent danger, dial 911. Police will respond. You can choose to remain anonymous, or by identifying yourself, you can help in future prosecution.

Hoarding is another form of animal abuse. Hoarding occurs when someone possesses multiple animals without providing adequate food, care and sanitation. Hoarders often fail to understand the consequences of their actions and may exhibit signs of mental illness. Reporting hoarding can be a first step toward getting that individual into new or additional treatment.

Neglect is the most common form of cruelty, and it's on the rise. As more Americans struggle with financial difficulty, many pets are put at risk of starvation, abandonment and death. Neglected animals may belong to neighbors you've known for years. They may try to hide the neglect due to embarrassment.

Physical / Environmental Signs



- Collar so tight that it has caused a neck wound or has become embedded in the pet's neck
- Open wounds, signs of multiple healed wounds or an ongoing injury or illness that isn't being treated
- Untreated skin conditions that have caused loss of hair
- Extreme thinness or emaciation
- Fur infested with fleas or ticks

- Patches of bumpy, scaly skin rashes
- Signs of inadequate grooming - extreme matting of fur or overgrown nails
- Weakness, limping or the inability to stand or walk normally
- Heavy discharge from eyes or nose
- An owner striking or otherwise physically abusing an animal
- Visible signs of confusion or extreme drowsiness
- Pets are tied up alone outside (including bad weather) for long periods of time without adequate food or water, or with food or water that is unsanitary
- Pets are kept in an area littered with feces, garbage, broken glass or other objects that could harm them
- Animals are housed in kennels or cages (very often crowded in with other animals) that are too small

You can be a hero. Reporting suspected animal cruelty ensures that animals in jeopardy receive prompt and often lifesaving care. If you are concerned about your safety or that of your family or pets, you can report animal cruelty anonymously. Please know, however, that animal control officers and/or police may be very busy so it is up to you to not give up. Follow up if necessary. An animal's life could be in your hands.