



Written by [William P. Hoar](#) on April 26, 2011

## ObamaCare's Annual Check-up: Ailing; to Get Worse

Item: "More than 100 health care reform advocates rallied Wednesday near the site of the new Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center to celebrate the anniversary of the Affordable Care Act," reported the Kansas City Star on March 23. "'For the first time in the history of this country, we will — maybe — see the end of physical suffering to a large degree,' Rodgers CEO Hilda Fuentes told the group. The health care law has already brought several changes in medical coverage but won't be fully implemented for several years. Many Republicans contend the law is too costly and unconstitutional."



**Item:** "Michelle Obama on Wednesday weighed in on the one-year anniversary of the health care law her husband signed into law, arguing that the changes will help parents raise a generation of 'happy and healthy kids,'" reported the Politico website on March 23. For example, the First Lady urged parents to ask for a BMI (Body Mass Index) "screening to catch any obesity problems early on: 'today, most of you can get your child's BMI screened without paying a penny out of pocket.'"

**Correction:** Being overweight is a personal matter, but being burdened by big government is a national problem.

However, the Nanny State relishes any opportunity to grow more meddlesome, pretending a BMI test is "free" when it is in fact paid for by all of us. Our width is being used as an excuse by the government to go to greater lengths to impose more restrictions. And this test, by the way, deems more than six in 10 Americans to be officially "overweight" — including, in their primes, elite athletes such as Michael Jordan and Cal Ripken.

The first anniversary of ObamaCare brought out both critics and defenders of the jumble of regulations (an additional 6,500 pages' worth in the *Federal Register*) and mandates in the law that drive us closer to the complete nationalization of healthcare in the United States. As then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) famously declared, the legislation had to be passed in order to find out what was in it. Well, the more Americans discover about the law, the less they like it.

While it is true that many Republicans decry its costs (about 91 percent are against it, by one recent survey), there is also a solid majority of independents opposed, as well as a goodly helping of Democrats. A Rasmussen poll in March found that 62 percent of all likely American voters favor repealing ObamaCare.

Americans have been pushing back, as well they might, since the President's promises about decreased premiums, lower costs, improved care, and retaining existing insurance have already been shot full of holes. The law's very premises are unsustainable. As noted by a *Forbes* blogger: "It adds \$100 billion in spending per year at a time when there's a \$1.65 trillion budget deficit. With other entitlement programs set to run out of funds, this adds another looming financial obligation to the mix."



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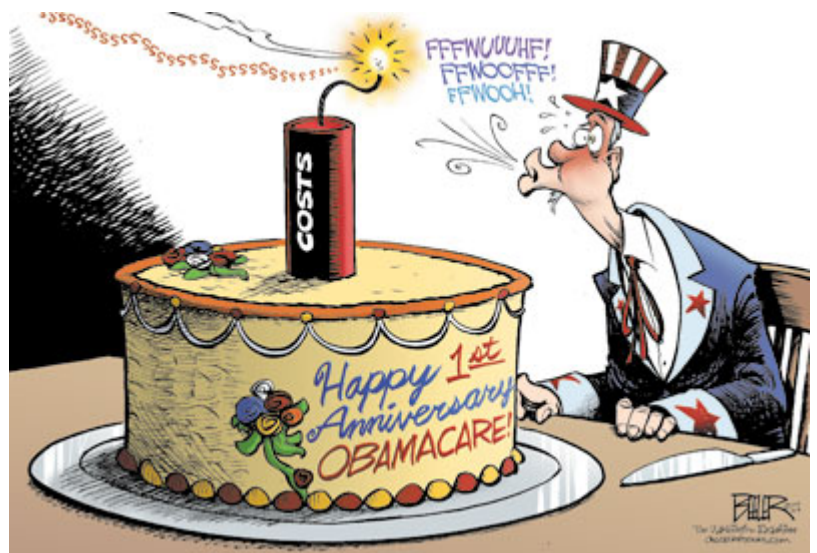
Since its narrow passage (by one vote in the Senate on Christmas Eve), the law has grown less popular. Before ObamaCare was rammed through the Congress, 38 states introduced and two states enacted legislation to block it, notes Michael Cannon in the *Detroit News*. In the year since, he continues,

Six additional states have enacted laws, and two states have amended their constitutions to block it.

Twenty-eight states have sued in federal court alleging the law violates the Constitution. Individual citizens have filed another two-dozen challenges.... Two federal courts have struck down all or part of the law as unconstitutional.

Opposition to the law contributed heavily to sweeping Republican gains in the 2010 elections. The House quickly voted to repeal it. Twenty-one governors have threatened not to implement it. At least four states have frozen, returned or refused the federal funds it offers. Three governors have refused to implement it.

As critics predicted, this supposed cure is proving to be worse than the ailments it pledged to heal. The former head of the Congressional Budget Office, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, has determined that just the tax on insurers to take effect in 2014 will raise family healthcare premiums by \$5,000 over the decade.



Proponents of ObamaCare, in order to fund their adventure, “socked some of the most popular bogeymen — insurers, drug companies, and medical device firms, among others — with new taxes,” recounts Sally Pipes of the Pacific Research Institute. She continues:

Pharmaceutical companies face a steadily increasing multibillion-dollar tax bill through 2019, while device companies have to send 2.3% of their revenues to Washington.

Insurers get the worst of it. They’ll pay \$8 billion a year starting in 2014 — and \$14.3 billion annually four years after that.

The president and his allies have decried the industry’s profits and executive salaries, claiming that insurers can more than afford to fund the expansion of coverage — and offer more generous benefits.

A number of regulations on insurance companies have already come into effect. For instance, young adults can stay on their parents’ insurance until they’re 26. Co-pays and deductibles for preventative care are also eliminated. Limits on annual and lifetime out-of-pocket spending are being phased out too.

Of course, somebody has to pay for all those new taxes and benefits. And those somebodies won’t be insurers or drug firms. They’ll be American patients.

Just as there were payoffs to get the bill passed, the government is deciding who among its allies can be



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relieved of the burdens of the new regulations. Waivers have been granted to more than 1,000 sponsors of health plans — with the largest being the heavily Democrat United Federation of Teachers Welfare Fund in New York, with some 351,000 enrolled in its plan. Others granted waivers from the red tape and added costs include the AFL-CIO and SEIU.

Also hard hit by the new law have been those companies that offer the popular Medicare Advantage plans, essentially private insurance for the holes in the government's insurance entitlement. Medicare's own actuary has estimated that ObamaCare would drive about seven million Americans from such plans back into Medicare.

However, as noted in a piece by Michael Tanner in the *New York Post* for April 6,

Since traditional Medicare lacks several Medicare Advantage benefits, many will have to buy so-called "Medigap" policies to make up the difference. And who's the nation's largest marketer of Medigap plans? The AARP [which heavily promoted ObamaCare].

An 18-month congressional probe found that the AARP stands to make \$55 million to \$166 million in one year alone from seniors switching from Medicare Advantage to AARP Medigap plans. Over the next 10 years, it would earn more than \$1 billion from new customers. Business is good if you can get the government to put your competitors out of business.

The AARP isn't the only big ObamaCare winner to come to light in the last few days. A hearing by the House Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations disclosed that labor unions and big businesses — including General Electric, Verizon, AT&T and IBM — have received nearly \$1.9 billion in payments under the new health-care law to help offset health-insurance costs for early retirees.

The biggest single recipient: the United Auto Workers, which got nearly \$207 million in taxpayer money. By the time the feds finish handing out funds to well-connected companies and unions, it's expected to have cost taxpayers \$5 billion.

In the meantime, there are also built-in incentives for private firms to dump the insured onto the government's rolls. Already kicking in are higher premiums, more taxes, and less competition. Down the line are bigger deficits, more centralized planning, and the inevitable rationing of care by the feds. If you get a sweetheart deal, you win in the short run; if you are a taxpayer, you lose for a long, long time. And the empty promise of better physical health through big government is already hurting the nation's fiscal health.

After only one year, the program has earned a motto: ObamaCare — it's enough to make you sick.

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