



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 6, 2013

Sebelius Admits ObamaCare Enrollment Figures To Be Released Will Be Low

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius admits that the launch of ObamaCare has proven unsuccessful thus far. According to the secretary, enrollment numbers, which are to be released next week, are [extremely low](#).

Though the Obama administration will not be releasing the figures until next week, Sebelius gave some indication of what to expect during her testimony before the Senate Finance Committee.



“Our early numbers are going to be very low,” said Sebelius, citing difficulties with Healthcare.gov as the problem. In fact, Sebelius ultimately places all the blame for the low enrollment figures on the problems posed by the healthcare website, saying that the “struggles that people have had getting access to the site and getting information” has meant that not many people signed up.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) criticized the flawed healthcare website, calling the problems posed by the site “unacceptable.”

According to sources inside the Department of Health and Human Services, just 6,200 Americans applied for health insurance through the government website on October 1, the day it was opened to the public, and less than one percent of all visitors to Healthcare.gov actually enrolled in a health insurance exchange. In other words, 99 percent of all visitors to HealthCare.gov left the site before enrolling.

Millward Brown Digital, a company that tracks web traffic, provided figures from the first week of online ObamaCare health insurance exchanges. “Over the course of Obamacare’s first week, 9.5 million people visited healthcare.gov, the federal government’s official healthcare website and the de facto exchange for residents of two thirds of the states,” [wrote Matt Pace at the company’s blog](#). “In addition, the 16 operational state-run exchanges combined to attract over 3.1 million visitors during the same period.”

Officials in the administration purported to not be aware of the actual figures, likely hoping to sidestep questions about the implications of low enrollment. The Health and Human Services Department has announced that it will not release any enrollment data until next month, perhaps in the hope that by then the figures will appear less paltry.

But the *Wall Street Journal* [contended](#) that any indications from the administration that they do not have figures is false.

The states running their own exchanges report enrollment more regularly, which ranges from the low thousands in big states like California to a single person so far in Delaware. And the HHS-run exchanges are designed to make daily reports, seven days a week.

When asked if the numbers are expected to remain low in November and December, Sebelius merely



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indicated that she was hopeful that they won't be: "Well, I'm hoping that with the site improved that we'll see more robust numbers," Sebelius said. "But until the site is fully improved, and we really kind of open up the doors wide to a lot of people, we're going to have, I think, a struggle getting significant numbers to sign up."

Marilyn Tavenner, administrator for Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said on Tuesday that the Healthcare.gov website is expected to be fully functional by the end of November.

Whether the site will be "fully functional" by the end of November seems unrealistic, however. According to Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, ObamaCare's website might need to be [rebuilt](#) from scratch to protect against cyber-thieves because he fears it's not a safe place for healthcare consumers to deposit their personal information.

"I know that they've called in another private entity to try to help with the security of it. The problem is, they may have to redesign the entire system," Rogers said Sunday on CNN's *State of the Union*. "The way the system is designed, it is not secure."

And it is never a good sign when key contractors for the site are departing from their positions. [Politico reports](#):

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced the departure of a top official at the agency. CMS CIO Tony Trenkle was the direct supervisor of Deputy CIO Henry Chao, who has been identified as a lead liaison to key contractors who built HealthCare.gov and who briefed the White House monthly on implementation. He is departing for a job in the private sector on Nov. 15.

The failed ObamaCare website has been the subject of significant criticism considering the site's extravagant cost.

"HealthCare.gov is an unmitigated, \$400-million disaster," declared Rep. Phil Gingrey (R-Ga.). He continued,

Deadlines have been repeatedly missed. The databases that store sensitive medical and financial information aren't secure. Those attempting to enroll in health care exchanges have been unable to do so due to technical "glitches." Worse still, these same individuals will be slapped with a penalty tax for being uninsured. If the federal government is unable to manage this website, how can they possibly manage our country's health care system?

The site was designed to serve as many as 50,000 people per hour, a figure that is now being heavily criticized as it fails to address the needs of the 50 million uninsured people in the country, with an additional 15 million who are currently buying insurance on the individual market and will have to change.

Tavenner contends that once the site is functional, a new campaign will be necessary in order to convince young, healthy people to sign up in order to offset the higher cost of insuring older, less healthy people. Without young people, ObamaCare could not work.

Efforts to drive up enrollment figures may prove to be futile. As noted by Democratic Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, the low enrollment may not be limited to just technological issues. "I believe that there's been a crisis of confidence created in the dysfunctional nature of the website, the canceling of policies, and sticker shock from some people," she [said](#).

Whether or not ObamaCare enrollment increases to the numbers desired by the administration remains to be seen. But instead of learning from this latest fiasco and getting the federal government out of



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healthcare, some believe that the flawed ObamaCare roll out will be used as a pretext for even more federal involvement, eventually leading to a “single-payer” system of government healthcare.



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